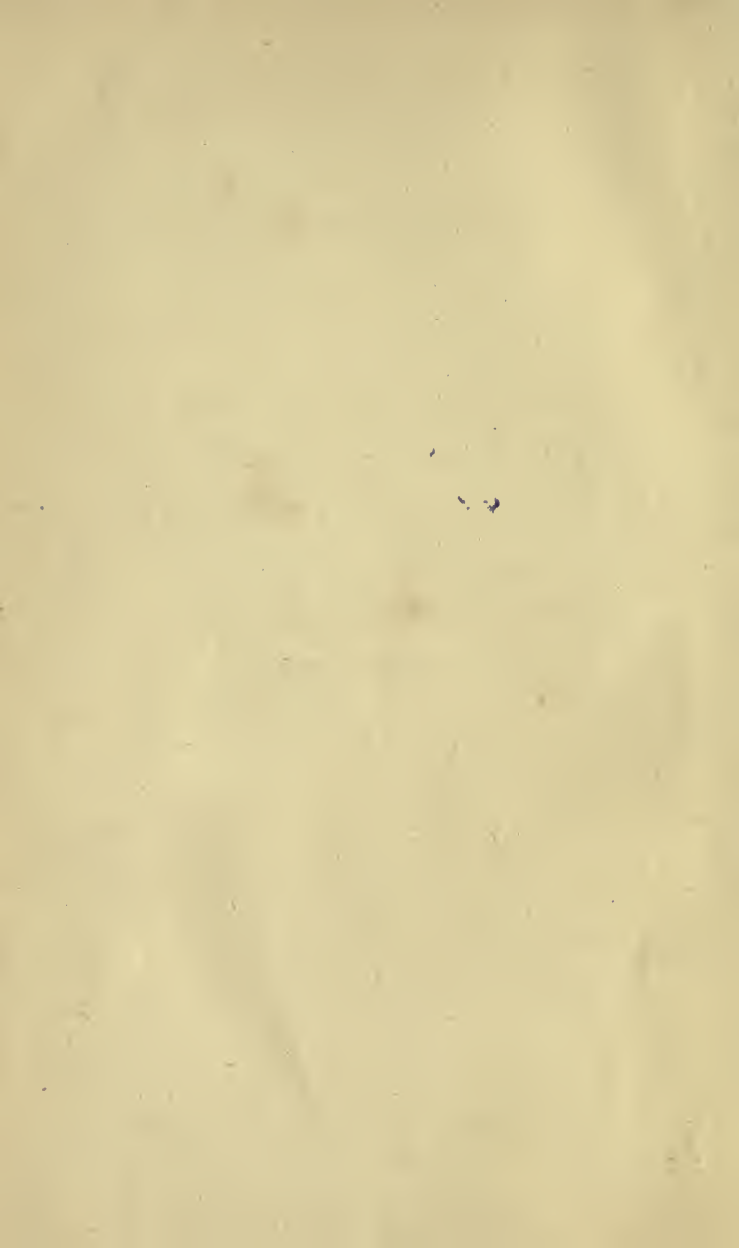




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THREE STORIES

BY

VITESLAV HALEK.

UNDER THE HOLLOW TREE.

✓POLDIK THE SCAVENGER.

ON CONDITION : OR PENSIONED OFF.

TOGETHER WITH

✓TWENTY-EIGHT LYRICAL PIECES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

TRANSLATED FROM THE CZECH BY W. W. STRICKLAND, B.A.,
TRIN. COLL., CAMBRIDGE.

YORK:

J. SAMPSON, PUBLISHER, 13, CONEY STREET,
1886.

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P R E F A C E .

If the reader will take a map of the world and draw three lines, one from Venice to Dantzic, another from Constantinople to the White Sea, and a third from the Erz Mountains, west of Prague, to Kamschatka, he will be able to form some idea of the vast stretch of territory affected by Slavonic civilization.

No confraternity of nations, not even the Anglo-Saxon, occupies so large a portion of the earth's surface as the rapidly-increasing Slavonic brotherhood.

On this account alone, if for no other reason, any attempt to bring home to English readers something of the inner life of some of these peoples is worthy of attention. Bohemian literature, moreover, has several special claims upon English readers. In the first place more than once the royal families of England and Bohemia have been united. Then again the country to some extent in its configuration and the variety of its strata, still more in its plethora of coal, ironstone, and other minerals has much in common with England. Bohemia has never broken entirely with the traditions of feudalism, and in the flourishing condition of its principalities and great-estates, the richness of its woodland, the abundance of its game, its fine breed of horses, and the excellence of its beer, we seem to see a copy of old England, and are reminded that similar causes produce similar effects: not that this is exactly true of the last item, however, which is at once milder and of purer quality than our own. Lastly, the religious struggles of the Reformation were fought out in Bohemia much on the same lines as in England, and while we may proudly claim some spiritual affinity between our own Protestant martyrs and the victims of Papal power in Prague, we are also reminded that in the national hero of Bohemia, John Hus, more than in any other of the great Protestant martyrs, were exhibited the most spotless purity of life, the most complete absence of self-seeking or worldly ambition, the most loyal devotion to duty, and the most simple and ready self-sacrifice in the cause of truth. The literature of a country which has produced the most perfect type of Christian piety which the

world has yet seen, a man who of all others approximates most in his life and death to the originator of the Christian cult, merits something better than neglect at the hands of Christians steeped in the flimsy rhetoric of French triviality and the latest production of a civilization which was of no mean order while England still revelled in barbarism, might occasionally be exchanged with advantage for the endless verbiage of our own school of novels or the edifying lucubrations of Emile Zola. Gôethe, in a conversation with Eckerman, speaks with admiration of the simplicity and purity of the Bohemian writers, and since his time there has been a great re-awakening of the national spirit, and the language which had sunk to be a despised dialect of the common people of the towns and the peasantry of the rural districts, now claims half of the University of Prague, has its seat in one of the finest theatres in Europe, and is once more the proud mouthpiece of art and science.

The writer, some of whose stories are here brought to the notice of the English reading public, was one of those who helped on the attainment of this proud result. Palacky and Jungmanns aroused the interest of the people in their own history by publishing historical and antiquarian works in the vernacular. Cajetan Tyl is still remembered as a patriotic dramatist and writer of fiction, and Erben's Slavonic folk-lore has a general interest, but none of the Bohemian writers has caught so speaking a likeness of the inner life of the Bohemian people as Viteslav Halek, no one is remembered with such enthusiastic affection by all classes, or strikes so responsive a chord in the feelings of high and low. Already throughout Bohemia societies have been formed for the reading of his works, although he has not been dead fifteen years, and when I lodged in Smichoff with an honest Bohemian stonemason and his wife, I found it difficult to keep their hands off my copy of his stories. The more cultivated classes admire him for the simplicity of his style, and even the Germans are constrained grudgingly to acknowledge his merits. A complete edition of his works has indeed, been lately published in the original language edited by a writer, whom from his name (Ferdinand Schultz), I should judge to be a German.

These works consist of some half dozen dramas drawn chiefly from Slavonic history. The first of these, Carevic Aleksej, was acted about the year 1860, and is modelled to some extent on Gôethe's Egmont. For another, composed and brought out about

the same time, (Kral Rudolf) the author had the honour of a short imprisonment at the hands of the Austrian Government. Sergius Catiline, Zavis z Falkenstjerna, Kral Vukasin (dealing with Servian history) and Amnon and Tamar are the names of his other dramas. They are all tragedies, and somewhat heavy reading. Amnon and Tamar, written in 1874, is the most powerful of them, but the subject is objectionable.

It is difficult for a foreigner with an imperfect knowledge of the language to judge correctly, but I should say that none of the other plays rise much above the level of Tennyson and Swinburne's dramatic efforts. Most of them, however, are the work of the poet's earlier years as a writer, and it is noteworthy that his latest works are far above those of a more youthful period, and this makes his somewhat premature death the more regrettable. These dramas fill two volumes. Another volume is devoted to lyrical pieces, ballads, and romances, written at different times between 1854 and 1870. A few samples are given in the present book of translations. These were most of them written in 1858. They are very popular in Bohemia. In fact a large number of them have been set to music and are now the 'volks-lieder' of the people. The student of Heine will observe that several of the ideas in these Bohemian poems have been adapted from the Jewish writer; for example, one of Halek's lyrics beginning:

Nay marvel not if thou should'st hear

The birds sing songs of thee, love, &c,

is a very close copy of Heine's

Wer hat euch dies Wörtlein gelehret

Ihr Vöglein in lustiger Höh?

Schweigt still? wenn mein Herz es höret

Denn thut es noch einmal so weh.

Es kam ein Jung-fräulein gegangen

Sie sang es immerfort

Da haben wir Vöglein gefangen

Das hubsche, goldene wort.

A wild poem by Heine, beginning

Ich kam von meiner Herrin Haus

in which the dead are supposed to rise from their graves and recount to one another what brought them there is also twice

imitated by Halek in his idyllic poems. Once in a scene in a poem called Alfred (1858) and again most elaborately in a poetical historical retrospect, Dedicove bile hory (1869).

This brings me to mention his volume of Idyllic poems written at different times between 1858 and 1871, some of which I judge to be the most perfect of his works. In the latest of these Idylls Devce z Tater (a maiden of the Carpathians) the splendour of the language and melody of the verse outshine that of any modern poet (Leopardi not excepted). The story is simple and interesting, the sentiment healthy, and the characters life-like; could it be adequately translated English critics would, I think, admit it to be one of the most perfect Idylls in any language. Krasna Lejla and Mejrima and Husejn, Turkish Stories in verse, (1859) and Alfred (a Czech romance) are also readable and highly poetical. Goar and Cerny prapor (the black flag) are the names of two others. A volume of prose stories written between 1857 and 1859 is of less interest. The stories are diffuse, full of criticisms about art and Wagner's music, the plot is slight and the characters commonplace. Two volumes of prose stories written at a much later period, a story called "In the cottage and on the estate," and a volume or two of criticism comprise the rest of Halek's works. One of these volumes of stories is here presented to the public in an English dress and of their merits the English reading public can therefore form its own opinion. The stories are for the most part translated literally and I must apologize for retaining here and there Bohemian words, sometimes where an English equivalent is wanting, sometimes, in order to give an idea of the character of the original language, which also means the character of the people who speak it. The stories have been twice revised. Once by a learned Bohemian Jew in Prague, to whom I read them aloud and who was kind enough to appreciate them in their English dress. "They are written from the heart to the heart," he said. And again a second time by an English literary man to whom the sentiment of the stories was so obnoxious that he put his pen through about one third part of them. Most of his excisions I have rejected. In spite of these revisions I cannot hope to have avoided many errors of translation which I hope may be corrected by the critical reader; nor can I expect a wide circle of English readers. The stories appeal to a civilization developing on different lines from our own,

and, although they are a true picture of Slavonic life and sentiment, they will no doubt often appear to English readers fantastic and overstrained. It may be worth noticing, in passing, that 'Poldik,' the name of a character in one of the stories, is the diminutive of Leopold, and that of Bartos, in another of them, stands for Bartholomew.

He who can read between the lines will perceive in both these stories ingenious political allegories. These I will leave him to discover for himself, premising that in both the main idea is the maintenance of the Bohemian nationality against the encroachments of the centralizing Austrian power. The last story is based on a strange institution in the rural districts of Bohemia—that of "vejmkar." In the case of small freehold estates or farms held on a long lease, the owner, as his sons grow up, pensions himself off; or, to put it differently, retires upon a settlement from the active management of the estate, in order that the eldest, youngest, or favorite son may marry and have the enjoyment of it. The pathetic fate of the village Lear in this story is an eloquent exposition of the abuses of the system which exists to this day in some parts of Bohemia.

I began this preface by pointing out what an immense portion of the globe forms the nidus of Slavonic civilization, and as many people have very indefinite ideas about Slavism and its languages, it may not be amiss to conclude with a few remarks upon the Czech or Bohemian language and its relation to other Slavonic dialects. As I do not profess to be a learned man, I have extracted the little I have to say on the subject from Mikes's Russo-Czech grammar.

The Slavonian nation, he writes, now contains eighty million souls, and is divided by its position into Southern, Eastern, and Western.

I. In Eastern Slavonia we find

- (1) The Cyrillic or Ancient Slavonic used, like the Latin, but very much modified, as the language of the Church, by Russians, Servians, Bulgarians, and part of the Dalmatians.
- (2) The Russian language divided into three slightly different dialects.
 - (a) Great Russian spoken by thirty-five million people.
 - (b) Little Russian spoken by thirteen million people. And

- (c) White Russian spoken by three million people.
- II. South Slavonic is divided into
 - (a) Servian spoken by five million people.
 - (b) Croatian spoken by one million people.
 - (c) Carinthian-Slovenian spoken by one million people.
 - (d) Bulgarian spoken by seven million people.
- III. Western Slavonic is divided into
 - (1) Polish employed by about ten million people.
 - (2) Czech divided into
 - (a) Cesko-Moravian spoken by over four million people.
and
 - (b) Hungarian-Slovenian spoken by two million people.
 - (3) Lusatian-Servian divided into Upper and Lower, and spoken by 150,000 people in Saxony.

I will not weary the reader by going over in detail the relationship of these languages to one another ; suffice it to say that the Czech or Bohemian is most closely related to the Upper Lusatian, the Croatian and the Little Russian dialects. The Bohemians, like most of the Catholic and Western Slavonians, use the Latin characters, and thus their language forms a good introduction to the study of the rest.



Under the Hollow Tree.



CHAPTER I.

WHEN Venik was twelve years old, his father Riha took him from school. "You must help us now," he said. "You will be our little shepherd, and will drive off the sheep to the hill-side; then in the afternoon I will bring you your dinner there, and you will come home yourself for the evening meal."

Venik spun round with delight on his right heel. His teeth flashed out from his gums, and his father added, "Take your violin with you to the pasturage." After this, Venik was like one possessed; he skipped about the apartment, till he had skipped up to his violin, taken it down from its nail, stretched several of the strings, and played and skipped about at the same time.

Venik, it must be understood, learnt the violin at school, and on Sunday used to play primo in the gallery so well that the schoolmaster composed a

solo in the gloria expressly for him ; and when Venik played, people at church turned their eyes to the gallery instead of looking at the altar. But no one could see him from below, he was still so small that he scarcely touched the rail of the gallery with his head. Then year after year the head emerged just over the rail, but the violin was yet invisible from below.

So then pretty early next morning Venik drove off the sheep to the hillside below the wood, and took with him his violin. Below the hillside murmured a river, on the hillside began to murmur the oakwood. Venik skirted the wood, and at the edge of it he noticed a single old tree whose trunk was hollow, so that four people could comfortably seat themselves inside. This tree looked as though it had stepped out from the wood. It had a sort of door and threshold ; on the threshold, beside the entrance, squatted Venik, that he might look after the sheep, and he said to himself " Here I like to be : beside this tree I shall remain."

When he had sat thus a short time and saw how the river fled away below him, and how the sheep kept creeping over the hillside, and how the wood behind him kept murmuring so softly, something stirred within him like the river, and something murmured softly like the woodland.

But when birds began to call to one another from the wood, Venik thought that he ought to answer them. He took his violin to make them some response.

He played a whole mass in their behoof and his own, just as he had played it last in chapel. He thought that in that way he should soonest make friends with them by showing them what he knew.

He played: and when he came to the gloria, where he had the solo in chapel, he thought he ought to do his very best. He did his best, and played till his face shone. If those birds had understood anything about playing they must have been well contented with him. When he had finished playing you might have heard an answer, but it was not the birds who answered, it was the little Krista who, when Venik had finished playing, began to sing over her solo for last Sunday's mass. Unseen she had crept behind the tree, and now betrayed herself by her singing.

Venik was the violinist of the gallery, and Krista was its chief songstress; she had a voice like a little angel, and when she sang people said it was like stringing pearls on a silken thread. Venik and Krista made music in the gallery side by side; and when one accompanied the other people said the chapel was like paradise; they were not brother and sister, but people called them "those children," because they always learnt together, together walked home from school, and from home to school, and stood together in the gallery. The village folk talked about "those children" on their way to the chapel; "those children" were like a miracle to

them when they heard them in chapel, and they talked about "those children" again all the way from chapel.

Krista was an orphan; she was now nine years old, and had no recollection of her parents. She was attached to the home of Venik's father like the swallow's nest which hung from the eaves, and which no one thought of pulling down. Venik's father, perhaps, did not the least know why he had her at his house. It may have been because she was an orphan; or, perhaps, it may have been because of her sweet little voice. She was like that swallow's nest under the cornice: no one pulled down that nest.

Venik's father was sometimes known as the cottager, because there was another Riha in the village—a peasant proprietor—the brother of Riha the cottager. They also talked of Riha as Riha the widower, because Venik had already lost his mother.

When Krista began to sing behind the tree, Venik put down his violin, turned in the direction where sat the little songstress, beat time to her, nodded with his head, and was well satisfied. But when she had quite ended he roughly accosted her: "Krista, why are you not at school," he said.

"Why are you not there too," said Krista.

"I, indeed! I am twelve years old and belong to school no longer, but you are only nine."

"I dont belong there either now," retorted Krista, "and I wont go!"

“How dare you? if Papa knew of it he would drive you there,” retorted Venik angrily.

“I am come to feed the sheep with you, and you want to drive me away,” pleaded Krista.

On this Venik stood up, took her by the hand, and said imperiously, “Go at once, or I will drive you hence. Hie away to school!”

“I wont go, and you know it,” retorted Krista.

And when she would’nt stir an inch, Venik took her round the waist and dragged her as far as his strength sufficed. Krista staggered back, sank to the ground, burst into tears, and cried plaintively, “Ah! I am only a poor orphan girl.”

These words touched Venik. He forgot all at once that he had to send her to school, and only saw that Krista was in plaintive mood, and that he was the cause of it. He stood as if fixed to the ground, and did not know in which direction to move, whether towards Krista or towards the tree; then he went to the tree and sat himself there. He wished to play but it would’nt come. No mass, no song even occurred to him. Then he looked round at Krista and could have cried with her, could have gone to her, could have soothed her, could have asked her pardon and have excused her school, but he did not know how he could do that.

He felt even worse when Krista ceased to cry, when she raised her head and in silent sort reiterated what she had said before in words. When having

her hands clasped and herself sunk to earth, and when having her eyes full of salt tears and fixed on the vague distance, like an actor in his part, she confirmed even by the expression of her countenance the signature over which was written, "Ah! I am but a poor orphan girl."

As she sat thus plunged in her childish grief, Venik silently approached her, squatted himself beside her, and after a few moments said, "Krista, how does it feel to be an orphan."

He said it with all the sympathy of which, at his age, he was capable. He said it as if he would have told her, "Tell me how it feels and I will share it with you."

"How does it feel?" said Krista, in reply to his question. "When I have only you, and you drive me from you, how can I be anything but an orphan?" and her eyes still moist with weeping turned from the vague distance to him, and were full of mute reproach.

"Nay, I do not drive you from me, but I want you to go to school, and to school you must go, for you are not twelve years old like me," said Venik.

"I don't want to go to school any more," retorted Krista, "I like to be here on the hill side, and stay here I will."

"And where will you learn to sing," asked Venik as a last resource.

"With you," said Krista, and this quite beat Venik what to say next.

However, he answered, "You might go to school, and after school come here on the hill side. Lord! how we should get on if you learnt at school and here as well!"

At these words Krista fell a thinking, then she looked at Venik, took him by the hand and said, "You are right, I will do so. I will go to school, and after school I will come to you on the hill side."

Thus did these two young diplomatists come to a mutual understanding. And when both were satisfied, Venik said, "Are you still a poor orphan girl, Krista?"

"You know that I am an orphan. I have neither papa nor mamma," she said, and Venik felt again so sorry, that he thought he must still try to do something for Krista to make her less an orphan.

And he said, "I have no mother either." He said it as if he gloried in it, and as if he made Krista a sort of present, and as if that present was the mother whom he had lost.

Venik thought then that he had effected in Krista what he wanted to effect in her. Renouncing his own mother, he laid that renunciation in the balance, and Krista seemed by so much the nearer to him. He gloried in his own orphanhood that Krista might bear to be an orphan more easily. He discarded his own mother as though he would discard even life itself for Krista's sake.

Krista's case was indeed different. She had never

seen Venik's mother ; she had not known her, and so she thought that at the Riha's there had never been a Mrs. Riha, and that Venik all his life had never had a mother. But now when Venik announced his loss, Krista perceived that what he did not possess he had really lost. "Did they bury your mamma?" asked Krista, as if all at once his misfortune presented itself to her imagination.

"They did not bury her," said Venik, "because I was still quite little and it was winter, but in the cemetery she lies for all that."

Venik's mind was haunted by a notion that when his mother's death took place people had said that they were not going to bury her ; and he had clung to this idea ever since, just as it happens still oftener that a chance word which we have heard in childhood, and which we have clothed with a wholly incorrect meaning, hampers us with that incorrect meaning years after our reason has learnt the right one. So Venik till now would have it that his mother was not buried, that thus she was perhaps not entirely a corpse, and that consequently he was exaggerating a little when he said that he had not a mother either.

"Stay, if she is not buried let us bury her here on the hillside," said Krista, "and then you will always be near her ; you shall dig the grave and I will bring her here."

Very little of all this certainly did Venik under-

stand, either of what Krista wanted to do or what she had got in her mind. But children quickly adapt themselves to everything. They pretend a tile to be a basin, a fragment of crumbling earth to be a cake, a pebble is a house, a bit of wood is a shop-keeper, the trestle of a table is a school, a scrap of rag is a shopful of dresses, a scrap of paper is a book. The fancies of children are omnipotent, and if a child says "our apartments with papa and mamma are better than the whole world," it is true from the moment that the child says it.

So when Krista got up to bring Venik's mamma, Venik got up also and began to make his mamma's grave beside the hollow tree. He grubbed in the earth with his pocket knife. And when he had done with the grave Krista brought his mamma. She had her lapful of her, and had collected her all over the wood and over the hillside.

And now they began to lay her in the tomb. First Krista strewed the grave with moss that mamma might feel it soft beneath her. Then she took a briar in full bloom and said, "look, that is her heart," and she laid the briar in the middle of the grave. Then she took two willow wands and said, "Look, those are her hands, and laid them next the heart. Then two other wands were for two feet, and finally she took from her lap sweet marjoram, and said, "Look, that is her head," and laid it on the top. Nothing more was wanted in her opinion

to make a woman. So the corpse was done with and Venik's little mother lay in the grave.

After this began the funeral in due form. Krista began to weep, and Venik wept with her. And they wept in earnest. Then Venik took his violin and played a "miserere," just as he usually did in the cemetery, and Krista sang. Then Krista sang over the funeral hymns, and Venik accompanied her on his violin. They sang and played everything they knew; they sang funeral hymns for the burial of a child; then those for youths, and lastly those for adults. And they sang and played with so much earnestness and with so much warmth of feeling that they were both quite ill after it, and hiccoughed with emotion. A more touching funeral never took place in reality than the imaginary one conducted by these children. If the spirit of Venik's mother hovered above them, doubtless it rejoiced and wept with them.

Then the little gravedigger filled in the grave with earth, and his little mother was buried. They still had to sing over, "Oh! rest in peace," and afterwards "We bid adieu to this body, we bury it in peace." Thereupon they quitted the tomb to the sound of the song and the violin. But once more they returned, not indeed to the grave exactly, but aside to the hollow tree, for Venik said that he would compose a requiem, and that there should be a full choral mass. And he played and Krista sang. They

played and sang through all the solos, and the hollow tree was both church and gallery.

Even when late that evening they drove home the flock they were still sobbing and crying, and the next day Krista wouldn't think of going to school, "for you know," she said, "it is the vigil after the funeral."





CHAPTER II.

FROM that day forth these children felt that they were equals. From that day forth one was no more an orphan than the other. From that day forth the hillside was their consecrated ground, it was also their home. In the house they had a father, even Krista had a father in old Riha; on the hillside they had a mother, even Krista had there a mother. Immediately after school she used to be with Venik, and when there was no school she was with him the whole day.

Such days were like saints days to both of them. Then she sang till her voice rang all through the woodland, and Venik would play on his violin, till people going past used to pause, and all the shepherds of the village would most gladly have pastured their flocks on the hillside if they had had the right of pasturage there. When it rained the two crept into the hollow tree, and then it seemed as if the tree was resonant with string and song, as if in its old age it grew young again in heart and mouth, and as if itself played and sang.

The rain drops fell splashing among the leaves of the old tree, and from its hollow, from its extinct portion, issued songs as though the tree had a young heart and a young mouth. When the sun shone the children seated themselves before the tree in the cool shade; and while all around the faded grass drooped and died, in the cool shade of that hollow it grew rich and strong as if it had been watered by the dew.

After a time Venik learnt also to imitate the birds on his violin, and when he had a mind could arouse such a concert that Krista herself sat beside him in astonishment, and as if in the presence of a revelation.

In the meantime Krista learnt to sing at school, and learnt also with Venik; at school with more ardour than formerly, in order to give pleasure to Venik, and when with Venik with more ardour still, in order to give pleasure to him and herself too. And so over the hillside these two young artists fluttered like two birds with happy notes. They reanimated it, for all its life the like of these had never there been heard. They were like the living heart of that hillside; they were its language and its speech, and could well have been a consolation to any who chose to listen to their conversation.

They were developed beyond their years; the girl's little throat was as consonant to Venik's strings as the two children were to one another, one was the complement of the other, so that I might have called

the tones of her voice and the tones of the violin comrades, if there had been as many likings and dislikings in the kingdom of tones as there are among men.

And they grew. When Venik was fifteen and Krista twelve, Krista also quitted school; and proud she was, as Venik had been before, to think that she was now twelve years old. But what delighted her most was that now she could linger on the hillside all day long; and then at that time Krista desired nothing more than this; she had everything; twelve years of age, the hillside, and on the hillside singing, and besides singing, Venik and his violin. A loftier ideal of happiness she had not. Her little heart panted for no other bliss, but was filled to the brim with that of the present hour. Nay, it was even overflowing. She even felt that the world had a superfluity of joy and brightness, the sky a superfluity of blue transparent ether, the world a superfluity of song and all sweet scents. It never oppressed her now—the thought that she was an orphan. She felt no special want to be supplied, and if she could have managed to give full expression to her feelings, she must have said that she rejoiced to live in the world.

But all at once Venik was again a solitary on the hillside. Riha, his father, began to fail in health, he took to his bed and Krista had to stop at home with him. From that moment Venik ceased to take

his violin with him: the song and the playing were silenced; death, like the shadow of a heavy pinion, hovered over Riha's cottage, and our children all at once ceased to be children. The world all at once took on a different colour; it suddenly lost for him its brilliance, and his breast was overflowing with anxiety. When Venik from the hillside saw his cottage-home it looked to him as though it could be singled out from all the other buildings by particular signs, and to Krista sitting in complete silence in the sick room with the ticking of the old clock and the groans of the failing Riha, it seemed as though an invisible finger had wiped off from the world all mirth and all sweet singing. All who came into the sick room were gloomy and grave; those who went away from it seemed to be without hope, and Krista, who sat continually in the sick room, felt as if all that gloom and hopelessness had concentrated itself on her; and time elapsed.

* * * * *

Krista flung herself on the bed sobbing, and out of doors the death knell was sounding far and wide. When its deep vibration thrilled over the hillside Venik started to his feet like a wounded hart. With weeping and lamentations he collected his sheep, and with weeping and lamentations drove them home. He had no need to ask for whom the death knell was tolling, he knew it in an instant, and if he had not known it, a single glance at the sick room would

have told him all. The sign of death was visibly scored upon the house. That heavy wing had swooped down upon it, and the expression of everything was one of gloom and sorrow.

Krista knelt by the bedside on which Riha had just expired, Venik knelt beside Krista, and in broken syllables—for in such the deepest anguish is wont to speak if it finds words at all—thus addressed her, “Now I also am a poor orphan”; now he had sacrificed his father also; now Krista was at last in no sort poorer than himself. Ay, it seemed to him that he was the most wretched of all.” Then both felt as if in presence of an apparition; they could not grasp the truth, and it seemed to them as though this truth was somehow not quite true; and then again it appeared beyond all suspicion to be the truth. And the truth was yet more irresistible when people brought a coffin to the house. Then Venik went to meet this coffin, and felt as though he himself must be lodged therein; he embraced it and cried out “So this is now papa’s only chamber.”

After this anguish silenced him; perhaps it deafened and stifled him. Venik found no more words; he neither wept again nor lamented. Not even when they bore away his father in that new, narrow chamber to the cemetery, to lay him beside Venik’s mother, who perhaps after all was already buried there. Venik took his violin, to conduct his father to that last resting place, and when the singing

and the weeping above the grave were ended, Venik began to weep above it. He wept on his violin; he wept so that all the people burst forth into tears afresh. He played "The orphan child." It was a language which everyone understood better than words,—it was the language of tears, which are disparate from words. In a region of the heart already inaccessible to words, those tones opened for themselves every fastening, and pierced and saturated all. People had never heard speech so moving, and Venik hitherto had never spoken in such moving language.

Everyone was astonished at him, and Krista stood as though changed to a statue. Those tones were not the outcome of mere memory; they were the offspring of anguish, and Krista again found force to weep. They were the tones of orphanhood, and where in the world are there tones more touching.

This time Venik for long would not detach himself from his violin, and long was the burial speech he spoke upon it.

Only now for the first time he saw exactly how people are laid in the grave, because he whom they laid there was his father.

When all was over Riha's cottage had a new owner. Instead of Riha the cottager came Riha the peasant, brother of the defunct, and now Venik's guardian. He was already at the cottage with his wife when Venik and Krista returned from the

funeral, and he at once began to order this and order that.

Venik and Krista did not understand what all these orders meant. They were still in fancy by the father's grave, and when they came home they heard many words. All they understood was that from that moment everything would be different.

All that had been heretofore began to crumble beneath the children's feet: with their father perished even their home. It was unloving words which they now heard, and a loveless home is no home at all. They listened like frightened birds, and longed to flee away to the hillside.

"You Venik," said Riha, "can't you leave that precious violin to be a violin. A great boy like you and nearly grown up to go mooning about the hillside; what a pretty affair it is! Thy father was too good-natured to thee, and when he saw thee and thy violin together, he thought—God knows what he thought. But what will become of the house and farm, I wonder, if you treat it like that? Until harvest you shall still pasture the sheep. When harvest comes I will take a turn with thee in the field myself, and after harvest I will find someone to put you in the way of things."

"And thou," said Riha's wife, turning to Krista, "dont let me see thee running out of the house any more after Venik. A girl like thee, who could already be in service, to go prowling and howling in

the woods! Once I miss thee from the house and I make short work of all thy caterwauling! Just remember that thou hast but a slippery foothold in this house and that we can manage to do without thee. Thy howlings wont make the cottage bloom, and we cannot have thee here to be muffled in cotton wool for the sake of thy singing. Mercy on us! I suppose thou thinkest thyself a cut above all our peasant girls."

It is possible that many of these words were true, but they were all ill-timed. At that moment it was cruel to scourge hearts already in any case bowed with grief. I have already said that Venik and Krista did not fully understand all they heard; only so much as this, they felt that every word inflicted a wound upon them, and that each wound smarted.

That day, at even, may be by accident, Venik and Krista met at the hollow tree on the hillside. Krista was already there, and Venik came somewhat later.

"I am come to say good bye," said Krista, and flung herself on the little grave which three years before they had dug for his mother.

"And I am come to say farewell to the hillside and my violin," said Venik plaintively!

"And I to say adieu to thee, dear Venik," added Krista. "Ah, heavens! I mustn't dare to be beside thee any more. I mustn't dare to sing with thee, they have taken my all. Oh, now I am a poor orphan girl," and she fell a-weeping.

"Come when you like, Krista," said Venik with sudden determination. Who ever heard of such a thing! You not to sing! I not to play! This very night I will bring away my violin and hang it on the tree, and play I will whene'er I have a mind to, and you shall come here when you choose,—upon my word you shall."

"I shall not dare," said Krista, plaintively, though Venik's determination revived her considerably. "I am already but a cipher at the cottage. I have nothing more in the world. Why did they not bury me in the grave!"

At mention of the grave, Venik again gave way; but after a pause he said, "Meet here we will, you shall see, and if they pursue us we will away to the woods."

And after this they went home as if from a second funeral. That same evening Venik took down his violin, even tore the nail out of the wall, and went with both to the hillside, hammered the nail into the hollow tree and hung the violin upon it. But he soon took down the violin and played upon it its own farewell and its own lament. Possibly the Rihas heard him—and how could they fail to hear him when the village was close to the hillside? however they said nothing when he came home. But Krista was the worse off of the two. Already she had no hillside to fly to. Already she had no breathing time to look forward to as a consolation. Already

she had only a hard couch on which to weep herself to sleep at night.

The home which but yesterday was like a warm nest now breathed upon them like a winter's gust. Venik now encountered no loving looks responsive to his own, and heard no loving words. And if Krista was still attached to the house like the swallow's nest to the cornice—now the cornice itself began to totter—there were already people to be found who would pull down the nest.

One day, just before harvest, Venik, seated on the hillside, began to reckon how long the hollow tree and the hillside would be still a portion of his world. The wheat already pricked to maturity, it was but a short time to harvest.

Krista was at work in the house when her peasant mistress stepped up to her, tore her work out of her hands, trampled it on the ground, and screamed, "Why, hast thou no hands thou awkward slut?"

Krista stood before her in amazement; and the peasant woman continued, "Perhaps you expect me to pick it up from the ground for you."

To this Krista replied, "Kind mistress, I cannot do it any better, and if you will not shew me how to do it, I shall not be able to work for you."

"Then be so good as to be off to-day better than to-morrow. Come, come, none of thy threats to me. Tie up your rags at once, and dont let me see you here by nightfall."

After this Krista began to implore forgiveness, for she felt that perhaps she had been hasty. But the peasant woman would not hear a word. "Dont let me see you in the house a moment longer," she roared, and Krista did not venture to address her again.

She collected her clothes, tied them in a bundle, and with the bundle tramped off to Venik on the hillside.

"Now I am going, now it is all over," she said when she came there. "Now I dare not venture into the cottage." She said it with a smile, for her grief assumed the guise of smiles, which were indeed a kind of determination. And then she said what had happened.

"Where shall you go?" said Venik, as if beside himself: for indeed he had never before had to face so horrible a calamity.

"I know not," said Krista, "I only know that I must say good bye to you in earnest. And again she laughed a short constrained laugh, so that Venik began to be embarrassed to know whether it was all jest or earnest.

But it was all so perfectly true, that Venik for a long time lost the power of speech. When he found words to speak the first he uttered were "you shall not go alone; I will go with you."

"Where would you go," said Krista with surprise and terror.

“Do you think I shall stop here without you? We will go and be in service together,” spoke out Venik.

Then Krista could have fallen on Venik's neck and have kissed him all over. To have only him and he not to cast her off,—he to wish to entwine his fate with her's,—was not that enough to make her feel at that instant twice a woman? was not that enough to bring all at once into her heart spring time, fair weather, flowers, and all sweet songs?

“We will find a place where we shall be allowed to play and sing together,” said Venik warmly, and as if in proof thereof, he forthwith loosed his violin from its nail and began to play as if he wished to say good bye to all the birds in the wood, and as if he gave them to understand that he was going to search for himself a hillside, a wood, and a hollow tree,—everything in another corner of the world. Krista sang to his accompaniment, and it seemed quite impossible for these two beings ever to be separated, for that playing and that singing to be isolated from one another. They were so closely united that it was impossible to think of them as two.

“Do you know what,” cried Venik of a sudden, with as much delight as if he had found a treasure, “we will not go out to service anywhere. We will go into the world, I with my violin, and you shall sing to it.”

They knew what the world was like which they would have entered on as farm-servants behind the

barn, and wished to enter it. But they might quit their home for other scenes, and that would be also to go into the world. They had been willing to take service with people ; now they would go and make people merry with singing and music,—would that be worse than service ?

All that Venik now thought about was how he could get his clothes quietly into their wallet as Krista had done, and then they would be off. And they arranged between them that Krista should pass the night in the hollow tree, and keep watch over Venik's violin, lest haply they should lose it just at the very time when they had most need of it. Then he was to bring his clothes there at night and they were to be off before the break of day.

The seed which is no longer sheltered by the husk is easily carried away by the wind : these children had lost the sheltering husk of home, and the wind carried them away. They quickly came to an understanding about a plan and the means of carrying it out.

When that day at even Venik drove his flock homeward, he drove them quickly, as he did on the day when he heard the funeral bell toll out the news of his father's death. But he drove them with different feelings. For indeed the circumstances were different. Venik was in high spirits. To-day he longed for something to occur which should bring down upon him the wrath of the peasant Riha, his

uncle; such wrath that he would have to fly his home, and then he and Krista would be just in the same plight. This he did not succeed in bringing about, but it was not for want of trying.

Riha's wife greeted him with these words, "Haven't you said farewell to that precious bride of yours," she said. "At last we have got rid of her, the bread-wasting vagabond—that little pet of thine. We sha'nt have to scrape together cotton gowns for her any longer, nor take care lest her soft hands get callosities upon them."

To that Venik replied, "For all you say I know why you have driven her forth. It is because my dead father loved us dearer than the cottage. You would gladly be rid of me, too, because all you care about is the cottage. But you wont succeed in that, I tell you."

These words enraged Riha's wife because they were true, and because she saw that Venik began to have an inkling of her own bad intentions. And when at supper she told her goodman what Venik had said, the day of judgment was rehearsed in that building. Riha hunted for Venik to teach him how to speak to his aunt in future, and when Venik was not to be found, he said that it should stand over till morning, and that he would give it him with his breakfast.

But he never gave him anything more at breakfast. Venik had already migrated, wallet and all,

to the hollow tree ; and when Riha brought him his breakfast next day, where then were Venik and Krista ?

In the house an alarm was raised. No one knew aught about Venik ; none of the servants had an idea what had become of him. And in the village people laughed at Riha and told him that now he would have to pasture the sheep alone.

And so Venik and Krista threw themselves upon the world. Very early, when above the tops of the old oak wood crept the first rays of dawning, he and she stood prepared for the journey. They stood before the hollow tree as by their sanctuary, as if it were their true home. Thither from the cottage they had fled with light hearts : now that they had to flee from it they felt a load upon their hearts. Here was their church in which they had been both angels and pious listeners. Perhaps that tree had roots even in their hearts. And certainly even the flowerets which grew upon the hillside had in their hearts both soil and sustenance. Now they felt a load upon their breasts. And they knelt beside that little tomb in which, many a long day since, they had buried the sweetbriar, the willow wands, and the sweet marjoram, and of which they had made Venik's mother.

“ Venik, thou weapest,” said Krista, and wept also.

“ Krista,” said Venik, “ if in the world we ever fall sick, we will come here to get well.”

And it felt very hard to take the first step. Then yet once again Venik took Krista by the hand, held it firmly, and said, "Krista, if thou art lost to me in the world, I shall come here to seek thee—remember the way."

And both felt heavily oppressed, as though someone was taking their heart out of their breast piece by piece.

The first step was so hard to make that they scarcely managed to take the second. Then their steps soon became lighter, and when village, river, hillside, and wood were lost to view, they were already as light as two birds. Youth alone easily adopts itself to all, and quickly forgets both weal and woe.





CHAPTER III.

THAT day they tramped many a long mile, and passed many a village. As yet hunger had not importuned them, and they had tramped along easily enough, but when hunger began to hint its presence, they had to reflect how to rid themselves of that unwelcome guest. So far they had marched through villages only for the fun of the thing, and had not wished to post themselves by the door and explain by their music that they were in want of food. But when reality was more powerful than their weak thought, they were fain to discuss what decided step should now be taken. It was already afternoon when they reached a new village, and their feet began to ache. They sat themselves down near the village under some willow trees, and Venik said, "Now we must try our fortune, and now we must arrange what we are going to play and sing." And they began to compose and arrange. At this very time a large group of children wended their way to the village school. Hearing young musicians, a youth and a girl, who might well have been going

to school with them, they paused to listen ; and as the musicians and their listeners were both equally juvenile, they quickly came to understand one another. The young public paid what it could, and Venik promised to accompany them with his music to school.

And he accompanied them. Krista paced beside him, and Venik played all he could think of to make them dance and laugh and whistle. After him trotted the youthful group of scholars, and a procession so gay debouched into the village that the like of it the villagers had never seen before. To school advanced so cheery a procession of children that even the school had never seen anything like it. In a moment school was deserted, and round Venik and Krista gathered an audience which was composed of all the children in the village. Then Krista began to sing, Venik accompanying her on his violin, and the school children were almost beside themselves. When it was rumoured among them that the musicians were orphans, gifts rained upon them from all sides. Kreutzers, all kinds of sweetmeats and sugarplums which the children had with them for school. Venik soon had his hand full of kreutzers, and eatables and dainties filled Krista's apron.

This happy beginning filled them with hope and courage. As the children were now obliged to go in to school, they made a compact with Venik and Krista to meet them again as soon as school was

over. And who would have thought it ? these young rascals marched out of school to the sound of music, as proud as the gay fellows who swagger home from the alehouse on festival or gala days, to the accompaniment of fife and tabor.

Venik and Krista went thus from house to house, everywhere playing and singing some piece. Everywhere the school-children trooped after them, and they seemed to have brought back spring with them into the village, and surprising it was to see how many gifts they collected at the various homesteads.

Then they also played and sang pathetic songs. Krista sang "The orphaned child," Venik accompanied the song on his violin, and when the village children again mentioned to their parents that the musicians themselves were orphans, tears started from every eye—young and old wept aloud, just as though someone had been dead—such were the laments they made. We have already seen how Venik played this piece at his father's funeral ; now to his playing was superadded Krista's singing, and she in no wise lagged behind her companion. Those around who listened were not orphans ; and yet no single heart was unimpressed. The children of the village felt as though they had lost a mother ; the mothers felt as though they were already laid in the grave, and their children were covering them with pine needles.

The effect which the piece produced was almost

terrible. The people knew the song, but never in all their lives had they heard it sound as it did then. They seemed to be hearing it for the first time ; they seemed to hear in it tones completely new ; no one had a suspicion that it contained a fund of pathos such as no one could resist. In the tones of our musician that song was heard in all its grandeur, aye, in majesty, and every heart was rent.

After that piece, if they had implored anyone of the masters and mistresses of the several homesteads to be their father and mother, not one of them would have reflected a moment but would have led them away and treated them as their own children. They might have asked what they chose, and they would not have appealed in vain.

They had already no need to feel any anxiety about victuals. They were at once taken to a house, and on the morrow someone else asked them out, and on the following day someone else ; and so they could be a whole week here just as at home. Every one felt that they were not mere strolling musicians ; Venik and Krista were just like their own children to them, and were treated royally.

Early on the morrow they again accompanied the young people of the village to school ; after school, they accompanied them home, and in the village this seemed to be accepted as the natural order of things. Never in their lives before had the young people gathered so willingly to school, and never in

their lives had they marched so merrily from school.

On the Sunday our young musicians asked to be allowed to play and sing in chapel, and Lord ! how completely people forgot to look at the altar and fixed their eyes upon the gallery.

When in days gone by they had sung and played thus in the chapel of their native village, people, when they talked about "these children," were quite accustomed to them. Here people heard them for the first time, and also heard such playing and singing for the first time. That Sunday they might have selected whichever farm they pleased to sup at ; places were laid for them at every house.

It was fortunate for these young souls, at this period of their lives, that strangers treated them as if they were of their own family and at home.

Possibly, if things had fallen out otherwise, they would have lost their way and ended in filth and obscurity, out of which there is no means of extrication. But as it was, they never stumbled on to the false track to ruin ; their path led them other whither.

The fame of the young musicians spread rapidly. The young people of neighbouring parishes also desired to be accompanied to and from school with music ; an invitation was sent, and when Venik and Krista departed from the place where they had begun their musical pilgrimage, young and old escorted

them a good piece of the way, as if the two wanderers had been their own children.

Just before bidding adieu, Venik and Krista struck up the "Orphan Child," and the procession was drowned in tears. Then Venik struck up a lively tune, and the parting was a merry one. Their kind friends embraced them, and promised them whenever they chose to re-visit the village, to receive them with open arms.

So they separated. In the next village the young people were all expectancy, and Venik and Krista were welcomed as brother and sister.

All marched together to the accompaniment of music to and from school, then to the different houses in the village; and on the way there was a repetition of what took place in the first parish the two children had entered. The whole village went into raptures, and when the "Orphaned Child" was played people were drowned in tears.

This song had everywhere the power of enchantment. People were quite beside themselves, and yet they could have listened to it till nightfall and beyond. They scrutinized Venik and the strings of his violin, to see whether the instrument really was the source of what they heard issue from it. But the music must have been there evolved, although to them it appeared exactly as though the music came from Venik himself. As to Krista it was easier to satisfy oneself, she obviously spoke with a

real mouth, and so it was easier to believe in her heart.

On Sunday afternoon, young and old disported themselves on the village green, and there, too, Venik performed and Krista sang. All the youth of the village were soon in a ring round them, and behind the young people came the old, and then I really do not know who remained at home. Then might wicked people have gone from house to house and walked off with everything. No one would have prevented them, for no one was left at home to prevent them. But those wicked people who had slipped out to pilfer, hearing Venik and Krista, would have left off thieving, and would have gone and listened like the rest. Then Venik and Krista made a grand display of their stock of songs, playing what they just remembered and what they knew; they even sang and played masses, and the people said that they never before felt so festive even on a Sunday.

Their fame increased. Scarcely had they begun to feel somewhat at home here, before invitations came from two—from five villages all at once, begging them to come and delight the inhabitants. The whole district spoke of them, and if they had spent all their lives in going from village to village in the district, taking them in succession, our musicians would never have stood in need of their daily bread.

They even visited the town on market days, and when they posted themselves in the square, people

ceased their bargaining and came to listen. The shopkeepers went so far as to be angry with them, and jealous of them for hindering business, but as soon as they heard them, they gave them gifts like the rest. They were looked upon, however, with still less favour by some other singers who had posted a large booth in the market place, and notified on a painted board what they were going to perform. These latter had not a living soul on their side, and soon had to clear off, and lamentably bewailed the state of trade. But they dared not grumble too loudly, for our child musicians had so completely won over the listeners to their side that they had as many champions as they had listeners. Besides, in all their audiences, they found old acquaintances—people who listened to them here on market days, had heard them long before in their own native village, and introduced themselves to the children as friends, or, perhaps, even as relations of their family.

It is needless, therefore, to add that Venik and Krista prospered in their tramping mode of life. They were dressed very becomingly. Venik wore his shepherd's costume, only that everything was bran new, and fitted him like his own skin, in fact, the boy himself was like a bouquet. Krista was dressed in peasant's costume, but in gala trim. On her head was a short silken handkerchief tied in a hood, a string of ducats on her neck, a neat corselet showed off her trim figure, and a short skirt let one

catch a glimpse of a pretty foot in white stockings and low shoes.

They were like a picture. Everywhere they were taken for brother and sister, and to all intents and purposes were as brother and sister.

A year floated by like a day, and three years like three days. Venik was now eighteen years of age, and Krista fifteen. The boy was like an ash sapling. As for the girl it was a pleasure to look at her. And, of course, people did look at her. Venik himself sometimes stole a furtive glance into her eyes as he used to look into the fresh mountain spring. It happened that once again they came to the town, but it was not market day; there was a performance at the town theatre, and the villagers of the various parishes putting on their best suits for the play, and happening to talk about the theatre, invited Venik and Krista also to accompany them thither. Krista looked at Venik, and Venik went with her.

All the way there they scarcely spoke a word. Krista was wondering what it would be like in the theatre, and Venik's mind was perhaps similarly engaged. They were about to look upon an unknown world, and their eyes were downcast.

They had never yet been at the theatre, and when they had taken their places in it they felt as though a ton weight had fallen upon them. They saw a number of people before the curtain and behind the curtain—who could tell what there might be?

Then the curtain was drawn up and they saw a wood, and here both bethought them of that wood which stretched behind their hillside; they bethought them of the hollow tree and of that river which ran below the hillside; they were half inclined to weep, and again they were half inclined to rapture. But all was different in that wood behind the curtain. There people walked and conversed and acted together, and our two spectators felt even that wood behind the curtain grow dear to them. Their whole attention was fixed upon it, and everything happened quite naturally in it, and like real life. Now they were constrained to laugh, and the next moment they were fain to cry.

The play was over, and in the body of the hall twilight reigned. When they listened they seemed to hear their own names called, and that by many voices. It really was their names, and before they could recover from their surprise they felt themselves touched by hands, many hands, and again before they could recover from their surprise, they were gently lifted off their feet, and pushed behind the curtain into the wood, and a hundred throats clamoured for Venik to play and Krista to sing.

It was like a revelation. They did not know how it all happened, but they sang and played. It half seemed to them as though they were standing on their own hillside, and yet somehow it was quite different. When they had concluded the theatre

was all agape with excitement, and like one mouth, and they were obliged to play and sing afresh, and when even this was concluded Venik saw that a body of fine gentlemen had gathered round Krista and were conversing with her about the stage, and about matters which he himself did not understand, and which she, perhaps, also did not understand. And then again they talked to her about matters which pained him, and which he did not wish to hear. Then he felt quite fit to cry, and so he took Krista by the hand and led her out of the theatre and out of the town.

Then Venik felt as though he had a different pair of eyes, and as though Krista had become changed from what she had been hitherto. Lovelier, a hundred, a thousand times lovelier than she had been hitherto, and than they told her she was in the theatre. Venik thought that he must tell her so; but when he sought words to express himself he could not find them, and when he had found them they stuck in his throat. And then he felt as though he had a different heart. What was that strange resonance in his bosom which he had never felt before, but the beating of that poor heart? It seemed to beat more audibly: it was full to overflowing; and when he asked himself what that was within it, he was fain to answer that it was Krista. He wished to tell her so, but his heart throbbed worse than ever. And while he hesitated, he grew as pale as a

wall, and was fain to fetch a sigh from the very depths of his soul.

He could not the least recollect how long Krista had now been linked with him. So far as memory carried him she had always been at his side. With him in school, in church, on the hillside, on the road—everywhere she had been with him, and it could not be otherwise. But now he felt as though the Krista who walked with him was a different Krista from her with whom he used to walk. She was no longer like a deserted orphan whose brother he was, now she was a girl—Krista, and when he thought about her he trembled.

Until that hour they had shared the same couch, and when they had laid them down were like two birds of a single nest. To-day when they came to the farm house in which they were to pass the night, Krista lay down alone on the couch—for the first time alone, and Venik went out in front of the building and cried. He was alone at night for the first time in his life, and kept awake all night long.

The next day he scarcely dared to raise his eyes to Krista. He felt as though she were much above him, and as though he ought to beg her to allow him to remain by her side. He was gloomy and sorrowful, and when Krista looked upon him she too was gloomy and sorrowful, and her eyes were down-cast. And yet they had not wronged one another in

anything, they had done nothing to one another to merit blame, no single too-familiar word had ever passed between them.

That day the violin was left hanging on its nail, and Venik was well nigh heartbroken. He longed continually to meet with Krista, and when he had met her he longed to be away again, as though he had committed a crime. Then he fancied that Krista was ailing, and longed to enquire about her health; but when he saw her he saw, too, that she was as pink and fresh as a rose, and as beautiful as a day in spring; only her lips quivered for a moment as though they wished to whisper something, but they closed and did not whisper it. She was sadder and more gloomy than Venik himself, and conversed even less than he did.

Yet several days floated by, and they were more estranged. Venik did not play, Krista did not sing, they did not converse, they did not laugh together, they had no sweet confidences; and yet it seemed to Venik that he was happier then than he had ever been before. Until one morning Venik said, "Krista, I think that I am going to be ill."

Krista looked at him apprehensively and said, "Why should'st thou be ill?"

"I feel so oppressed, Krista. Let us go to the hillside to the old oak wood. If I am to get well again I shall get well there: if not, I had rather die there."

“Why should you die?” said Krista. “You are so young,” she added, and felt as though she had said too much, and as though in saying those words she had already sinned. She turned away from him, and after a long pause said, “If you feel so oppressed let us go. It is now three years since we were there.”

And they went. They went to the spot where they had first met one another, where together they had played and sung, where they had been like two angels, with the hollow tree for their sanctuary, and whence they had first gone forth together into the world.

The return journey was a dreary pilgrimage to both. Venik loitered wearily the nearer he approached the hillside; and once when he looked at Krista he said, “Krista, we are going each as it were alone.” They went, each as it were alone, immersed in his own private thoughts. At this Krista took him by the hand, and their hands were moist and like fire. In speech and manner they were equally embarrassed. Their mouths were parched, their steps tottered, and after this they again unclasped hands, and again went each as it were alone.

When they were exhausted by their walk they sat down under some willows, by a streamlet which fled away to the river, that they might rest themselves. Their feet rested, indeed, but in their soul they seemed to fret more and more.

In a neighbouring wood a cuckoo cuckooed. Krista looked at Venik, then yielded to tears, laid her head on Venik's bosom and sobbed aloud. Venik stroked her hair, stroked her face, and was like one distraught. After this Krista ceased to weep, rose, went to the streamlet, gathered at it "fishes eyes," and entwined them with her hair, and when Venik saw her it seemed to him that he could go mad with love of her—so dear she was to him.

Then they rose, went forward, and conversed. Venik felt that the previous burden had fallen from him, that his words were once more unfettered, and that he could breathe freely.

Only he still could not say the particular thing he wanted to say; and several times as he thought about it his words again became more constrained. But on the whole they felt freer. Already they could not say that they were going each by himself. Already they almost tripped along together.

So the next time they sat themselves down, under pretence of resting a little, Krista did not again fling herself weeping on to Venik's bosom, but none the less did Venik take her head in his hands, none the less did he lay her on his bosom, stroke her hair and face, and wipe her eyes, although they were no longer bedimmed with tears.

It drew towards evening as they approached the

hillside. The sun had set, and left but a faint blush in the western heavens; the day was over and had left but a shadow of itself; evening stole upon the world, and with it came faint odours and the song of birds.

When they reached the hillside and saw the hollow tree at the outskirts of the wood, Venik was like a child once more, and when he had seated himself at the threshold with Krista beside him he said, "Krista, now I feel ill no longer."

And here it seemed to Venik that never in all his life had he felt his breast so full as it was just then, and that never in all his life he had felt what he then felt. If he had had to explain it all, he would not have succeeded, but when he looked at Krista he thought his looks alone explained it. He was half inclined to weep, but much more to rejoice. The river and the village far below them already veiled themselves in filmy mists; that cuckoo which had cuckooed to them as they sat beside the streamlet under the willows, seemed to have accompanied them even hither; here it cuckooed from the wood.

And it seemed to them as if they had departed thence but yesterday. Village, river, field, wood, hollow tree,—everything was the same: even the nail on which Venik had hung his violin still stuck in the hollow tree. Only when he looked at Krista all seemed different. And he looked at her very much, and then everything was very different. Krista's

eye was inflamed and moist with tears, and when he touched her hand it was again as hot as fire.

When the moon rose, Krista said to Venik that he never was to think of her again, and Venik to this replied, "Prythee, why should'st thou unlink thyself from me."

But, as her only reply, Krista again laid her head on his bosom, and wept and sobbed as if she would unlink herself from him for ever. She kissed his face, his eyes, his forehead, his mouth—it was the first time that she had kissed him.

Then Venik said, "Krista be mine."

On this Krista nestled yet closer to his side—but then of a sudden she rose and ran away to the wood.

Venik sat a long time alone, and it seemed to him as though he had seen happiness flutter round him, and as if he had actually caught hold of it. He held it in his hands, he looked for it and did not know what had become of it. After this he shouted, "Krista, Krista," and when Krista responded not he went into the wood, gathered leaves and moss with both hands, carried them in his arms to the tree, and in its hollow trunk strewed a couch. Then he sat on the threshold, and was like a sentinel on guard.

There were no signs of Krista, but still it seemed to Venik as though she was there, and as if he saw her at every glance, and at every glance she seemed more

fair. Then she was there, she stood behind him like a shadow, she never stirred, her head drooped upon her bosom, and her hands clasped together.

“Krista, I have but now prepared thy couch in the tree,” said Venik, and his voice trembled so that it was not in him to say anything more. Krista without a word went and laid herself down in the tree on the leaves and moss.

Venik retired a few paces toward the wood, and laid himself down beside it.

But he did not sleep. It seemed to him as though he must make certain whether Krista slept or not. He rose, stole silently to the tree, looked in a brief moment, and in that moment Krista raised her head.

Venik as though with a knife in his heart retired to his previous resting-place, and laid himself down once more.

Then he fell asleep, and all his dreams ran on Krista. And he fancied that she laid her head on his hand; he fancied that he awoke, and that as he held it so his eyelids opened upon the happiest moment of his life. He fancied that he was completely happy, that nothing more was wanting to him, and in the consciousness of that happiness he again fell asleep.

And again he seemed to see upon her face a fire and a hot enthusiasm, and in presence of that fire and that hot enthusiasm all girlish modesty was

effaced, so that she had it neither in her looks nor her words. He dreamt so vividly that he fancied it could not be a dream. And even when he awoke in the morning he did not know how far waking realities differed from a dream, for that past night was to him both reality and a dream. And he dreaded lest it was reality, and he dreaded yet more lest it was a dream.

Krista had not yet awoke, she had not yet risen. He went to rouse her, and went to the tree along with the rays of the rising sun, which aimed its level beams into the hollow trunk. And when he had reached the spot along with them, at first he looked in furtively and then more boldly, the couch was vacant. Krista was not on it.

Venik felt as though only now he was immersed in dreams, as if only now he was laid in bed. He looked again and again into the tree, he looked again and again around him, leant his head on his hand to collect his thoughts—but he was not dreaming. He was awake. He tossed about the moss and leaves as though Krista might be under them, but she was not there.

And all at once it seemed to Venik as though the whole heaven had crumbled at his feet, as though the stars had fallen from the sky, and the last day had already come upon him. He grew as livid as a corpse, he longed to hurry away and bury himself in the grave, that he might the sooner rise from the

dead; and his eyes were suffused with blood, so that they looked like bleeding suns.

And then he thrust his fingers through his hair, ran along the hillside and past the wood, and shouted "Krista! Krista!" But there was no reply, then he ran into the wood, searched it cross by cross, and shouted, "Krista! Krista!" But there was no reply anywhere.

Then it seemed to Venik as though he had roved that wood for several days, as though he had grown old, as though he had lost the power of speech, as though he was exhausted, and his feet refused to stir. On this he staggered towards the hollow tree, and rested in weariness, and was still.

He waited.

He waited for Krista to come—for her to return. But even if she had returned, it seemed to him that now the world would be the world no longer, that the heaven would be the heaven no longer, since once the sun had stooped from the sky and had lost its pathway in the heavens. And Krista returned not.

Venik waited that day and that night: he waited the next day and the next night. At night he slept on that couch of leaves and moss from which Krista had vanished. He only felt that he was alone, and the hollow of the tree resounded with his sighs.

And once again he went out like a sportsman to the wood, and as though he was bent on sport, and

shouted, " Krista ! Krista ! " But he was an unlucky sportsman, and then he felt as though a wound had been made in his side by some one, and as though blood trickled over that side of his body.

Krista had made that wound, she had deserted him, and now for the first time he was an orphan.





CHAPTER IV.

IT seems to me that then for the first time was Venik without a public, without listeners, when seated again on the hillside, he took once more his violin in his hands and played, "The Orphaned Child."

He was that orphaned child. Long ago, when Krista had accompanied him with her voice for the first time in the gloria, she had burst into tears because she was an orphan; and Venik convinced her that she was not an orphan. Then his father died: Krista was driven from the house, and when she had to begin her wandering in the world he had taken her by the hand, and wandered with her, and pointed out the way; again she was not an orphan. And when it was all finished, she voluntarily departed from him, at the very moment when he had hoped with her to enter paradise. That paradise closed upon him—where was it now?

Venik's thoughts had no beginning and no end, they were like an unbroken wilderness, where the eye tires itself. There was nothing for it to rest

upon, nothing to look upon with pleasure. He had desired so little for himself; and when he lost even that little, it seemed to him that he had lost the whole world. He also had cherished her; and when he looked and saw how she had torn herself, root and all, from his very heart, he saw that where those roots had been was a bleeding heart.

He had moments when it still appeared to him that what had befallen him could not really have happened. Surely he was befooled, surely Krista would return to him all at once. And then he seemed to hear her step, and the rustling of her dress: for a moment he saw her dancing eyes, her heavenly look, and heard her glorious voice. He turned his eyes in the direction whence that step and that rustling seemed to come, and when he perceived that it was but a mere delusion he cursed his fate.

If some one had asked him how long he had already sat thus, he would have said, "a whole eternity," and he would have spoken the truth. And if he had been further asked how long he had walked with Krista in the world, he would have answered, "Two or three days," and would equally have spoken the truth.

Then Venik arose and went again into the world. Sometimes he played and sometimes he did not play, as the fancy took him. Sometimes it seemed to him as though he wandered in the world in search of

Krista ; and again it seemed to him that if he found her he should cast her from him that he might have her no more with him.

First he came to the parishes in which he had dwelt long since with Krista ; and when his old comrades saw him desolate, they asked him where he had left Krista. Then he sometimes answered with a word, sometimes with a smile, sometimes with a tear, just as was consonant with the answer. But through it all it was apparent that each of these modes of reply tormented him ; he felt it too, himself, and, therefore, made up his mind not to go to villages where he was known, but only to go among strangers.

In villages where he was not known, indeed, no one enquired for Krista, because no one had known her. But even that was not a clear gain to him, for he observed that he himself also on that very account made fewer enquiries about her. Already he had not enquired about her for many a long day.

Sometimes the whole business of strolling through the villages and of playing to people also wearied him ; he was sick of it all ; and then if he could find any gay young fellows anywhere he would attach himself to them as long as they wished to listen. By his playing he lured them to the dance, and he played so that anyone who had wished to tarry always beside him would perhaps have been led to destruction. And then although at the

beginning he was but sombre and melancholy, the further his merry companions prolonged their orgies, the gayer he became. His gaiety waxed in proportion as his youthful followers slackened and grew weary.

If people from the villages in which he had been so dear, when he and Krista were still their young musicians, had seen him at such orgies, verily they would have shrugged their shoulders at him, and the mothers would have cried "What a pity it is, poor boy, so young and bonny as he is, and once so good and honest." Now people began to nickname him "Wild Venik."

Then again it would happen that he had nothing to say to anyone. He shunned the villages, or at most seated himself or laid him down somewhere behind the barn under the willows, as long ago he had done with Krista. And here, just as he who praying with a rosary takes and pushes one bead after another, so Venik dwelt in memory on Krista, and word by word repeated everything he had ever said with her, everything he had ever felt for her, each single recollection was like a single bead of the rosary, and the whole remembrance was like a single prayer. Sometimes these prayers soothed him, but yet it was so only apparently. Then again it seemed to him either that he felt surfeited, or that he had not begun to be satisfied at all.

Sometimes wishing neither to go to villages where he was known, nor to those where he was unknown,

he prowled around so purposely and futilely, that when he tried to recall that wandering to mind, all he knew was that he sat on the hillside at the outskirts of the wood beside the hollow tree. It was passing strange to him. Like a heavy dream rested upon him all that had taken place beyond that spot of ground, and that had ended there. He peered into the tree, and there yet lay Krista's couch of leaves and moss as though he had strewed it there that very day. And here he flung himself on this couch and embraced the whole of it as if in a wild frenzy of passion. Then he laid himself down on it and lay awake or dreamt. He reflected how constant were those fallen leaves and that shrunken moss in comparison with man. Deprived of the sunlight and the sun's warm beams, it had not proved unfaithful to its post. In the hollow, worm eaten tree, he had laid that moss and foliage, and he found it there whensoever he returned.

Here it seemed to him that after all it was impossible that he was so deserted as he held himself to be. He got up, ranged the wood once more, and shouted "Krista, Krista!" but there was no reply; there was not even her footprint, there was not even her shadow. And when he turned back without success, he did not wish to go again to the tree, or to the couch within it.

Then he cast his eyes over his own native district, and felt as though here he was in his own home

once again. He longed to go back once more to the Riha's to offer to tend his flock, and even to leave behind him that violin which he knew not whether he ought to curse or bless. Once, indeed, under cover of evening he approached the village and wended his way to his own parental roof, and debated long with himself as to whether he should enter the house or not. He passed the courtyard and stood behind the hall door, next to which was the kitchen. In the kitchen on the hearth burnt a fire, beside the hearth stood Riha's wife preparing the evening meal. The fire flashed into her face, that face had the colour of the fire, and it was a strict face. But still it seemed to him like an honest face, and one that he could trust. Always it had never promised him anything, always it had only threatened him; and just because it realized its own threats, it was honest. Krista had never threatened him; there was no strictness in her words or face, and yet how had she sinned against him in comparison with yon poor old beldame.

Perhaps he would have entered, perhaps he would have offered to drudge at anything, and nothing would have been too burdensome for him. But at that moment Riha's wife carried away the supper from the hearth, she returned no more, and Venik departed. He paused awhile at the window, and looked into the lighted room. And here it flashed across him that the cottage with its bit of land was

his property, that it was a rare stroke of fortune for his uncle and aunt, the Riha's, when he went a-roving in the world, and that he might even now enter the chamber where they sat and demand of them an account of their stewardship over his farm and rights. He might settle here, leave his vagabond life far behind him, and become a well ordered man. A well ordered man !

Hereupon Venik turned from the windows and from the cottage, and went once more toward the hillside.

To be a well ordered man. What was that ? Venik laughed sarcastically. When he had fled into the world with Krista he was a well ordered man. When she departed from him—an end to orderliness ! even though he should be the master of a farm. Perhaps Krista was well ordered, and now he could be so too. Fie upon it all. Where was the good of perfunctorily saying, “I will be a well ordered man,”—and then to have in one's bosom everything in disorder. A cottage and a settled life do not create orderliness. And yet something still drew him back toward the cottage.

Then Venik struck off again from the hillside, bent his steps into the world once more and hurled himself upon it like a drop of the mountain torrent which blindly hurls itself into the river that it may reach the sea at last.

He was again the wild Venik who made merry all night long with a merry gay brotherhood ; who

tipped with them heart and soul, who made them merry with music and jesting, and who would not feel the dint of care till morning. Venik was again the centre of a group of lads in their prime ; only that at this time mothers would no longer have invited him to their homes : rather, they would have slammed the door in his face lest he should entice their son to drunkenness and debauch.

But he only acted thus in unfamiliar villages where he was not known in the days when he walked with Krista. When he came to the villages he knew he was different, as though he fain would humble himself, and as though he did penance for his nights of revelry elsewhere. He was gloomy and melancholy. Here he seemed to be still treading in Krista's footprints : and sometimes he fancied that he was tracing her and on the search for her. His familiar listeners perceived in his silent moods something sinister and had him in compassion.

And even here summer sped away. Sometimes the days were indeed as interminable as the sea, but summer whirled away with them as with all else : it engulfed them and there was never a trace of them. Three years floated by from that time when Krista took to flight from her couch in the hollow tree.

Then Venik went again to the same town in which he and Krista had been in a theatre for the first time, and where the people had lifted him and Krista on to the stage for him to play to them.

And when he saw the theatre, he reconnoitred it and pryed about it, and felt he hated it so bitterly that he would not have hesitated to throw a burning brand upon it: if any one else had done so, he would have looked on with delight, while the tongues of flame devoured and reduced to nothing a place whence began his hardest turn of destiny. He would have helped the flames yet further to devour and annihilate it, till there remained no trace of it, just as no trace of Krista had survived.

This hatred of the building, be it understood, did not hinder him from entering the theatre. He was now already of riper years than on the memorable day when he was first here, and he looked on things with different eyes. What he saw on the stage amused him: it amused him to see others the sport of adverse fate, it provoked him when they succumbed to their fate, and although it provoked him, yet it tempted him thither, and he seemed to read there a fragment of his own life and to be thereby consoled.

And now he frequented the theatre every day, and when he saw that there was but a spare supply of musicians in the orchestra, he offered himself with his violin, and was accepted. Then he looked from this orchestra on to that theatre as it were at first hand, he drank from it, as it were, the first draught, and when the curtain fell, he concluded all with his playing. And sometimes he was glad of this, and sometimes he laughed at it.

It pleased him well to have his mind diverted and employed. But it did not please him when he saw how those theatrical princesses to-day proffered love to this man, and to-morrow to that; to see them kiss and embrace one man to-day, and to-morrow another. This ran so counter to his ideas that sometimes he would not have grudged his words, if he could have told them what place they had in his esteem.

Sometimes also on the stage was the wood which he had seen here for the first time with Krista, and which reminded him of the hillside and wood, with the hollow tree at the outskirts of the wood.

Sometimes also he was asked to play a tune in that wood; and he played till he made people weep or whistle; for from his strings spoke both weeping and laughter.

Then they held Venik in respect and honour: they led him to a music master, with whom he studied and played all day long. They also taught him many things which he played to their admiration finely and touchingly. But still he only rose far above the rest, when he played those songs of his own just as he had taught them to himself on the hillside. Then, indeed, it was just as though the whole hillside breathed out of him, as though all the wood resounded in his strings, as if even the birds were full of voice, as if even the river played which gurgled far below. Of these songs people could not have enough, and called for them again

and again. But, indeed, when he played his "Orphaned Child," the public was enthralled by the magic of his art. Now it was as though every full grown man were again an orphan, and as though they were gathered together to one common grave to weep their fill.

At length rumours reached the town about other theatres, about theatres in the capital town of Prague. The newspapers wrote about them, and in the town they talked about them, in the theatre, everywhere they talked about them. And with these rumours came one certain piece of news, about a sort of prima donna who carried away the palm, both by her voice and execution, so that hitherto she had not her equal. When she stepped on to the boards, the wonder was that the garlands and bouquets did not smother her; and when she had finished her performance and prepared to drive home, people unyoked the horses from her carriage and with torches and hurrahings conducted her to her house. Rumour further said that she was young and beautiful, that she had been a strolling musician, until some one interested himself in her and had her carefully instructed, and that now she was a perfect miracle.

When Venik heard these and other things, a pang shot through him and he could not rest a moment. He left the orchestra, took his violin and as though everything was on fire behind him and around him,

he hastened onward toward Prague. And in Prague he soon learnt all about the matter. Here, whatever place he entered, people spoke about her. In the beerhouses, hostinets and cafés they were preparing for the theatre, all the afternoon, and evening was spent in conjecturing how many garlands she would get and who would throw them to her.

Venik listened and held his breath, and he had no need to begin the conversation anywhere. In every hole and corner he heard about her.

Was it possible that it was Krista ?





CHAPTER V.

TWO hours before the beginning of the play he had already reconnoitred the theatre in the hopes of gleaning some certainty without the need of asking questions. The moment the ticket office was opened, in spite of the jostling crowd, he was already to the front, and when he felt the ticket in his hands, it seemed to him to give him admission to the kingdom of heaven. But, indeed, who knows whether it were the kingdom of heaven to which it gave admission : possibly that ticket led quite other wither. At any rate he would not have parted with it for all the world, and when he looked at it as it lay in his hand, he seemed to be looking upon a portion of his own existence.

He had been seated in the theatre a long time before the beginning of the opera. He saw how they lit the lights one by one, he saw how the public sauntered in, he saw how the orchestra filled with

musicians, and he saw below the curtain a swarm of pretty feet already upon the stage. Who could say whom they might belong to ?

Everything seemed to spin round him, and he hardly seemed to be in the world. And again all around him roared with the din of a thousand voices, as when the wind crashes through the woodland and a tree is mere stubble in its path. The words spoken merged into one constant hum, and he seemed to be a tiny portion of that humming.

Then they began to play in the orchestra, and then the curtain was furled up. The stage represented a wood. Then she stepped forth whom all awaited with breathless expectation ; and when she stepped forth, garlands and bouquets fell thick at her feet ; it was a rain of flowers, and the people made the tempest. Through this rain and through this tempest it was impossible to distinguish anything clearly, and yet Venik fancied that he had distinguished something. Then the tempest subsided and the singing began. She sung.

It was Krista in every movement, and in every tone. Full well he knew her every movement ; full well he knew her every tone. And when she began to sing Venik felt a choking in his throat, and as though no heart beat any longer within him ; as though he was no longer alive ; as though it could not be the least true which yet was true ; as though everything around him was enchantment, and he

alone was in that enchantment. Would to heaven it were only enchantment !

At the first touch, when he saw, heard, and recognised Krista, he felt only unembittered delight. Delight—to see her so beautiful, and to hear her so touchingly powerful, that she seemed like a superior being. As though she had got wings and flown to the stars. It was Krista, but a heaven-descended Krista. It was a different Krista from the one he had known, but it had grown out of the old Krista.

He smiled and the tears stood in his eyes. So near he was to her, so far away he was from her. From the hollow tree hither the road was one which had taken three years to traverse, and he had reached the goal at last. Through a whole world, through an eternity he had to go, through nights of waking and debauchery, through a whole river of tears, and through many sighs that path had led—and ^{now} he had reached the goal at last. And now he seemed to be on a bed of roses, and to hear the song of the nightingale. And it was all Krista.

His heart now beat so audibly that he fancied everyone heard it, that even Krista heard it. But no one heard it, all eyes were turned to her, and Krista never heard it : at least she never thought of running to his side.

When her song was at an end they clapped and shouted ; Venik did not clap nor applaud, but he was greatly delighted. If he had clapped, perhaps

he would have called attention to himself; if he had shouted, perhaps he would have shouted Krista. He felt delight—unembittered delight.

Then the delight began to be embittered. A singer stepped forward, and here Krista was already not alone upon the stage. This singer pledged his love to her, and she pledged her love to him. Then they embraced and kissed each other. Already Venik was pretty well awakened from his dreaming and well nigh stricken to the ground. Here already he was not on a bed of roses, here he began to feel only its thorns. Here his heart began to beat differently, but his face grew pale and wan.

Then they sang together, the singer and Krista, and they sang about their love, continually about their love; when people after this again clapped and shouted, Venik neither clapped nor shouted, then if he had wished to shout he would have called out "a theatrical princess." And after that he would have burst into a mocking laugh.

It was Krista. And now began to drum in his head the words "It is not Krista, that being yonder *was*, it is she no more." The path to her had taken three years to traverse, it went through sorrow, tears, and sighs, and now that he had reached the goal at last, he said to himself, "I have found her and it is not she."

It was Krista and it was not.

When the opera was concluded, he heard voices round him saying, "They drag her home again." He ran out of the theatre and looked for the carriage in which they were going to drag her home. He saw a carriage, it was choke full of the garlands which were flung to her in the theatre, and young men were detaching the horses, and yoking themselves to the carriage in place of them. It appeared to him past all conception loathsome—but it was a lucky chance for him. He also harnessed himself to the carriage. When the road to her had taken three years to traverse, surely he might have one close look at her when they were in the same town together; and he awaited by the shafts.

Krista stepped into the carriage and seated herself in the midst of the garlands and bouquets. All the young men took off their hats and yelled. Venik also tossed up his hat and yelled. And Krista smiled blandly in all directions and bowed in all directions; she smiled on all alike, and she bowed to all alike. A portion of these smiles also fell to Venik's lot, and a portion of those bows, just as much as to the rest; he might go shares with them, and he went shares with them.

While they drew her along with yells and shouts Venik went almost close beside her, he could have touched her. When they approached a street lamp, and it cast a stream of light into the carriage, Venik cast a glance there likewise, but only for an instant,

that he might not meet her eyes. But indeed he need have been under no apprehension on that score—she had no time to meet his eyes—she had to smile blandly in all directions, and to bow in all directions. Then he took a long look at her, for he observed that they all took a long look at her. He took a long look and their eyes never met ; then it appeared to him that their eyes did meet, but it was dark, and a man easily becomes the sport of fancy when the lights are out.

Also a man in a multitude sees less and is less of a man, just as among many voices our own voice is lost, so also each particular individual is lost in a multitude of individuals. When a multitude is unwise—and it always is unwise—we are infected by the multitude and by its unwisdom. A single person would not have drawn Krista in her barouche : he would have said “Horses are for that purpose.” But the multitude yoked itself without reflection, said to itself “I am a horse”—and horse it was. In that multitude Venik tore along and yelled with the rest of them. He ceased to be Venik. He was at that moment only one of those who dragged and yelled and tossed up their hats.

Then they halted before a house, and Krista stepped out of the carriage. The crowd and the carriage stood before her dwelling, and those young gentlemen assisted her out of the carriage and conducted her up the staircase. Others took the gar-

lands out of the carriage and carried them after her. Venik also took one and carried it after the rest. He wished to see what sort of life she led, but he went more from mere instinct and merely because he was a portion of that multitude which carried garlands.

He saw but little of her abode, but enough to see that it was rich and costly. In the front hall the young men laid down the garlands and then went away : Venik did so too—laid his garland down and departed.

When he reached the street, a procession approached with torches and halted before the mansion. Singers sang and Krista came out into the open air on to the balcony, and thanked them all quite composedly and quite impartially : she paid him his due also and he accepted it. He heard her speak and when she opened her lips he seemed as though only now he saw and heard her, for in the theatre she merely sang.

Then all the pageant began to disperse in different directions, and Venik was in the street before Krista's house alone. And when he was alone he ceased to be a member of that multitude, became again a man, and was Venik.

He posted himself opposite the house, and his glance ranged over the illuminated windows. But, of course, he well knew which windows were hers, for he had a few moments previously laid a garland in the first floor.

And now he stood there, and looked and watched, to see whether he could hear any voice, and he heard many. There was a subdued hum of voices, perhaps there was a dinner party or some sort of entertainment, and numerous pleasure seekers with her. He heard conversation and laughter, he saw lights, he heard the singing of divers voices, then he heard Krista also sing, and here he began to parley with himself. He would have gladly posted himself at the very window, if need be, in order to gain a clear view of everything; but it was impossible. So he drew on his imagination for what he could not see.

A gas lamp was glaring near the window, and when the lamplighter came with a ladder to put out the lamp, he longed to ask to be allowed to mount the ladder himself. He could then have peered into the interior of the house and have seen whom she conversed with, and with whom she sang and laughed. But he felt himself frozen to the spot where he stood and could not stir.

Then he asked himself what he wanted there exactly, and whether he was in his right place there. It is hard to say, it is hard to answer. Rather let us philosophise on the very substance of spirit: we shall more easily answer the question what man is, than I can say whether Venik was here in his right place or not. He was, and he was not. Instinct prompted him to fly hence, and yet held him here so that he could not stir.

When he heard Krista's song above, everything pressed him to reply. She sang a song from the hillside, she sang what she had once sung with him in the viillages. Had he had his violin with him, he would have answered—he would have announced his presence. For a minute or two he thought he must run and fetch his violin, and that he must announce his presence. But he never went. Then he ruminated. If he had gone for his violin, and had played under the windows, it would have been peculiar: Krista would have heard him, and what then? Would she have started? or would she have continued to sing and jest? Would the song and jest have deserted her? Granted that it did desert her, then everything would have cleared away from her and Venik have been left in the street alone, and she would have been alone in yonder house. If he were to play below her window, she would be left desolate, her guests would disperse, and what he saw and heard would be all over. So in his ruminations he came to this conclusion, that it lay in him to say how long they had for the jest and for the song. If he should say "Hold! enough!" it would be enough. He granted them that feast; he prolonged it for them; and which of them had the least idea that so it was?

Verily Venik smiled to himself to think what a puissant lord he was, until he began to feel an arrogant conviction that everything which happened on that first floor was under his control.

But he did nothing, and yet he waited until everything was at an end. Gentry and ladies dispersed from Krista's house, and throughout the first floor silence began to reign. In the street where he stood not a living soul was to be heard.

The lights in Krista's window were extinguished and then a single window opened. It was a warm summer night and the window could remain open all night long.

The moon shone just in the direction of Krista's window, and Venik stood in the shadow of the opposite houses.

From Krista's window a head peeped out, and perhaps it was her head. Venik at that time stood facing her and was alone. Even she was alone at last. Then the head vanished and did not appear again.

If he had wished to address her, he could have done so before, but now it was too late. And what was there to say? Where to begin and where to end? His speech might need to be a very long one or it might be a single word. And what was the word? Where was it to be found.

If at that period when he sought her three years ago he had been ten times further away from her, he would have spoken to her, now he was but a few paces from her and yet he did not open his lips. Now he was simultaneously moved to anger, to weeping, and to laughter, and he neither wept nor

laughed nor stormed. Where then was he to find a word that should express both anger and weeping and laughter? And yet he found it. When the head had vanished from the window and all was silent for a long time, Venik called aloud from his hiding place "Krista!" and in that word was both anger and weeping and laughter.

He had not long to wait before the head again appeared at the window and looked up and down the street in great surprise. It looked up and down and in all directions but because Venik was in shadow it did not see him. And Venik did not stir any more. The head after a few moments again vanished from the window. Doubtless it thought that there was some trick in it all and that it was a voice without reality. After this complete silence reigned in the first floor, perhaps Krista was dozing, perhaps she had already gone to sleep.

Venik after this crept from his lair under cover of the shadow and only determined further that he would come pretty often to trick her with his voice unless he thought better of it.

And then he wandered about the streets of Prague and wandered in his own consciousness. He wandered even in his thoughts—he wandered even in his imagination. Yet unceasingly he heard voices, laughter, songs; he saw torches and a glowing face and in the midst of it all he himself seemed to shout out Krista, and when he had thus shouted all was over for ever.

Then it appeared to him that he again stood before Krista's house, and there he stood. No living soul was stirring anywhere, the house and the street were plunged in sleep—not a voice was to be heard anywhere as though that day had never been at all.

All that to-day had been, already now spoke only in Venik, it was already only an echo, though this echo was very distinct indeed and sometimes well nigh found a voice. The torches seemed to be aflame in his bosom and a cry seemed perforce to be wrung from it as if he had to shout for the whole troop.

The next time when Krista once more sang he was again first in the theatre. This time when the curtain was furled up, the wood was not on the stage: there was a garden and in it was a hum of voices. One might suppose a fête represented in this garden, and Krista sang at it while the guests amused themselves. The action on the stage was concluded by the first violin playing a solo melody which the public clapped: but Krista on the stage had to feign herself conscience stricken by the melody and finally to fall fainting on the ground whereupon the curtain fell.

When Krista fell fainting on the ground, Venik could scarcely refrain from calling out to her. But then the public kept on clapping, the curtain rose, Krista stepped before it, as if she had never in her lifefallen on the ground in a fainting fit, thanked

them, smiled blandly, and as often as the curtain furled up was ready with more smiles and with more thanks. When Venik saw all this thanking, he was no longer disposed to call out to her, disdain again played around his mouth and half to the neighbour who sat beside him he audibly exclaimed, "a theatrical princess."

His neighbour took these words for eulogy and to heighten their force, said, "yes, a perfect queen of the theatre!" and asseverated it to himself, which was also a kind of asseveration to Venik.

"Yes, a perfect queen of the theatre!" repeated Venik after him, as if he himself could heighten the force of his neighbour's criticism by repeating it.

What then happened after this in the theatre Venik scarcely saw or heard. All that was stereotyped in his mind was that solo of the first violin from the orchestra, then how Krista sank in a fainting fit, how the curtain fell, how the curtain was raised, and how Krista had her fainting fit over in a twinkling, and was able to thank them all and to smile blandly.

When the theatre was over there was no watchword given to-night that they were to take out the horses from Krista's carriage and drag her home.

But still Venik again posted himself by the exit from the theatre, and just where Krista had the other night stepped into her carriage: and there he waited.

There was the carriage again ready prepared, but Krista did not step into it, she told the coachman that she would go a-foot, and the coach only drove home her wardrobe. She went a-foot, and she did not go alone. There walked by her side a very stately young man. Krista hung on his arm and they conversed together very amicably. After them at a respectful distance followed more young men, doubtless some of those who the other day had drawn her carriage in place of horses: to-day they only followed as a kind of escort or body guard.

Along with these young fellows followed Venik and learned from their conversation both the name and rank of the person who accompanied Krista: but he did not much care about his name or his rank. Then he learnt that he escorted her almost always; that the barouche in which Krista drove was his and that she drove in this barouche, even in the daytime, whenever and wherever she chose.

Now this was not a matter of indifference to Venik: when he heard it the red blood rushed to his face. But then, yet again, he affected indifference and said, half to himself half to his neighbour, "Ah! well; I knew it from the first."

His neighbour doubtless paid scant attention to these words or to him who spoke them.

As soon as they had reached the house in which Krista dwelt, her cavalier bade her good night very heartily, kissed her hand, and made many polite

bows. After this he departed, Krista entered the house and the rest dispersed to their several homes. Only Venik again was left standing just on the spot where he stood the other day.

He was again overshadowed by the shadow of the opposite houses, while the moon's radiance fell in full lustre on Krista's house and upon her window.

This time there was no din of voices in that house. Krista was seemingly alone. Now he could have spoken to her. But what was there to say?

While he looked thus at those windows of hers, behind which floated rich curtains, he felt as though he fain must again cry out "Krista!" Then perhaps the window would be opened and she would appear at it. But he did not call out to her, and yet the window was opened and Krista appeared at it. She looked into the sky and to a star. Then she went away from the window and Venik heard her hum to herself snatches of song, and amongst them he recognised many from the hillside, and from the hollow tree. At this his flesh crept. Then she came to the window again, again for a moment looked toward the sky, and toward the star, and then Venik heard her humming to herself half aloud "The Orphaned Child."

And here Venik shivered as if the cold of winter had come upon him. Was she yet orphaned, was she yet in sorrow? Did she remember? Did the gorgeous life which she now led fail to satisfy her? Could he

have spoken to her, could he have questioned her, could he have announced his presence, he would have learnt all and perhaps they would have found one another.

They might have found one another, they had all but found one another, and here Venik again said to himself, that he wanted her not. And once more his mind ran upon the solo of the first violin, her fainting, the curtain, her smiles, her bows, her thanks, then her escort home, their confidential conversation, the barouche, and at the end of it all, her humming melodies and the "Orphaned Child"—and out of the chaos again emerged the title "a theatrical princess." If he had then wished to know and call her by name neatly and elegantly, he would not have shouted "Krista," but "Oh! Theatrical Princess," and there was humiliation to him in the expression.

So when Krista's head once more vanished from the window and when the song and that day's excitement was hushed for him, Venik hurried away from the spot not however stealthily to-day nor did he wander on the way. To-day he went direct to his temporary dwelling and on the road only "the orphaned child" kept buzzing in his head just as he had heard Krista hum it.

Next day he enquired for the manager of the orchestra, went to him and announced himself as a violinist and begged to be received into the orchestra.

The manager gave Venik something to play over and was fully satisfied with him, and told him that he would take down his name and use his influence to have him accepted. On this Venik further begged that he might be allowed on the next performance, as if to approve himself to the public to play that violin solo in the orchestra. The conductor gave Venik the solo to play through then and there to test him. As Venik played the conductor smiled and told him that he was quite satisfied with it.

And Venik also was quite satisfied.





CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the appointed day arrived, the theatre did not differ from its ordinary appearance except perhaps that the public interest was somewhat less than heretofore. The public knew the opera, and it knew Krista's song in it and was already accustomed to it as we accustom ourselves at last to all. Even popular enthusiasm in the end smoothes out its waves. Krista was an apparition above all dear to them but they were already habituated to it. To-day they went to the theatre pretty much from habit, not from any inward necessity, not because something drew them to it with irresistible force. Nothing that they could see and hear to-day could be any more either novel or striking. They saw and heard it already in their recollection, to-day those recollections had only to be sprinkled with a few drops of dew and then they would be tolerably revived, and ever recollection is but pale and wan beside the full-blown roses of novelty.

The theatre then had a more ordinary appearance. Among the public there was no expectation only

certainty, comfortable certainty. Just as, when we travel through a country for the second or third time we know where we ought to look out of the window and where we may spare ourselves the pains.

True, one new violinist sat yonder in the orchestra, but does that change the aspect of a theatre? Is the aspect of a country changed because there is one tree there more or one tree there less? In the orchestra! The orchestra is not the stage. On the stage we mark at once every change—but the orchestra! Who gives so much as a passing look to that. If a young drummer is seated by the drum instead of the old one whom they buried yesterday what of that? If a bald pate stands by the bass fiddle who a few years before had not yet grown bald—what of that? Not a single person paid the slightest attention to his head while it was hairy, why should he pay attention to it any more, now that it is smooth and polished.

A new violinist! Plenty of them are seated in the orchestra; whether there is one more or one less concerns only the members of the orchestra, and among these perhaps only the violinists, it does not change the aspect of the theatre. True there were in the orchestra artists as good as those on the stage, but it is the fashion with the public to look only at the stage, let us piously adhere then to the fashion.

And now the curtain was furled up. When the violin solo came, Venik settled himself to his violin and played. In this solo the violinist was allowed some liberty and was not obliged to confine himself rigidly to the written score, he might improvise and he did improvise.

When Venik began to play, something thrilled the audience and caused it to cast a languid look at the orchestra and it was observed that someone different was performing to-day. Even those tones were different. And scarcely had people listened a moment longer when they held their breath.

That violin was all at once in tears and lamentation. The hillside and the woodland sobbed out in it, and man bewailed. And he bewailed with anguish and with wrath.

The theatre was thrilled anew, it was thrilled again and again. Its aspect was completely changed by the mere swaying of a hand. Venik had brought the public to their senses, and now he played "The Orphaned Child."

It was a horrible outpouring of grief, and beneath it all lay a hidden tempest of emotion. People wiped away their tears, and their flesh crept.

And that violin seemed to wish to speak as follows: "Like two flower-cups, we grew together on one stalk, and thou, rapacious hand of society hast torn away the one and I the other am orphaned."

And that violin seemed to say, like two birds we fluttered together over the hillside when they take counsel together of what they shall weave their nest ; and thou insatiable maw of society didst devise a cunning springe. Thou need'st must catch my mate and I am orphaned."

And further it seemed to say, "Two hearts we grew together side by side, and one struck root in the other, 'twas I who cherished those hearts till they were like as one, but ye have rent away the one, the roots which ye have torn out with it have left but wounds, and those which ye have not torn out anguish yet more—ye have that heart and I—I am orphaned of it."

And then it said, "We were that sportive, laughter-loving nature which maketh music in itself : but ye had a craving for mere craftsmanship ; ye outraged nature, and nature thus outraged has found her way hither, and calls aloud in me because I am orphaned."

And yet again it said, "Faith have ye expunged out of my life, and what exotics have ye planted there instead? Who of you dares still to submit his prayers to heaven, when ye have plucked the heart out of my breast for life? But I indeed have a right to tears and bitter accusations and wrath and cursing, and I fling my curse upon you—I hate you and I curse you—I, only an orphaned child."

And much more in the like strain did that violin say to them, and the public heard it and understood it, trembled, and wept salt tears. It was like a trumpet call to judgment; an invisible hand wrote the words of fate and the words were comprehensible to all. The audience half rose from their places, to see who it was that could thus speak with his strings and their hearts heaved with one common emotion. He who but a little moment before was last in the theatre was now first. He singly had changed the whole aspect of the theatre—changed, nay, revolutionized it. They were but simple tones, but they crashed and sawed. The public swayed the head in one common movement, it seethed in one common turmoil of feeling, but it was silent. That silence was ominous.

And how passed it on the stage? On the stage was a garden and in it a gay company.

When Krista heard that melody, she left her gay companions, ran across the stage even to the foot-lights, ran even to the orchestra, and staggered back amongst her gay company. But it was not given her to rest there. She sprang to her feet once more, wrung both her hands, raised them clasped to heaven, then pressed them to her heart, then tore over the stage like one distraught, then seemed to shrink cowering into herself, then again raised herself to her feet with an effort as if she wished to retain her self-command, but in that over tension of

the nerves her strength seemed shattered at a single blow, she uttered a shriek which cleft every heart in twain and sank on the ground all at once, crushed and broken—sunk in a last and deadly faint.

If it was the mimic art, it was past all conception perfect; if it was the mimic art it seemed as though her every gesture had been fashioned by the Creator of the world himself.

So she remained lying and Venik still played on, and the public was carried away by the perfect acting of Krista, and was wrought almost beside itself by the perfect playing of Venik.

Thus they played together once again. The curtain remained for a moment still lifted, and when Venik concluded, it fell. And here arose such a clamour in the theatre, such a tempest of excitement, as was never before seen or heard in any theatre.

The public was by a single touch driven beside itself.

The curtain rose but Krista lay there still, she did not thank them, she did not smile upon them.

The curtain fell, but the public stormed on. And, hereupon, those in the orchestra told Venik that the applause belonged to him, and that he ought to turn toward the public and express his thanks. Venik turned thanked them and smiled, thanked them and smiled also in the name of Krista.

Still the public wished to see Krista again, and here those in the orchestra told Venik that he must hie on to the stage that he and Krista might express their thanks together. They lifted him quite on to the stage, and when the curtain rose, the public could perceive that Venik knelt beside Krista, he cried "Krista! Krista!" but that was inaudible to the public because of its own tremendous clamour.

Then the curtain fell and all at once it seemed as though a knife had stabbed the public and as though each man felt that knife in his own breast.

Then some one stepped forward before the curtain and announced that Krista had fallen in an actual fainting fit, and in the public silence succeeded to the storm.

Then no one stepped forward again before the curtain, but something like a flash of lightning ran through the public and with that lightning a hoarse thunder-peal: "Krista is dead!"

After this lightening stroke the public was stupified.

Meanwhile, on the stage Venik had started back from Krista and now wandered over the stage just as Krista had done a little while before. Then he again knelt beside her and thus remained kneeling. They brought Krista round, physicians hastened to her and vaguely stated that there might yet be hope of her recovery. Krista raised her eyes, seemed to

whisper something, seemed to seek someone's hand and no one understood it all.

Venik cried out "Krista! Krista!" and Krista seemed to collect her ebbing strength into one ray of light, fixed both her eyes on Venik, fixed them on him with a smile and said, "We have found each other at last!"

Venik knelt as if in a dreadful ecstasy and said, "Krista! Krista! we have found each other."

Then they carried her away from the stage, out into the open air, to the carriage and Venik accompanied her. He was seated in the carriage before they placed her in it, and when they laid her there he took her in his arms, and he held her softly and warmly so that she might have been upon a bed of roses; he held her to his heart, his breath mingled itself with hers, his eyes intercepted the rays of light which fell from hers, and at intervals as if from the very depths of his soul, re-echoed the words, "Krista we have found one another." But now it was as though Krista could speak no more in words, her spirit spoke only by a glance and by a smile, and in that glance was a smile.

And yet once again she forced herself to speak, "I knew that thou would'st come but I did not expect thee thus."

The carriage drove along at a slow pace. It was in solemn pomp that Krista drove home to-day and

yet she smiled. Her smile this time belonged to one alone, it was genuine and came from the heart, it was the reflection of her whole being, of her whole life, but of a life which already flickered in the socket. Krista knew it, Venik guessed it too well, and cried out "Krista, Krista, we shall yet tell one another all."

"Salute the hollow tree," said Krista, "I wished to have found thee there, thou hast been beforehand with me—'tis better thus."

The carriage stopped before Krista's door, Venik lifted her in his arms, bore her to her chamber, there laid her on her bed and Krista still sought his face with her hand. And her own face was smiling, though now her eyes grew cold, and fixed; her whole being already ceased to speak, and she moved no more. Venik again knelt by her side but she was already speechless.

The public dispersed from the theatre, many walked up and down before Krista's dwelling and spoke about her and about the violin player, and over Prague the news flew like wild fire that Krista was dead.

The storm now emptied itself out of the theatre into the town and as it enlarged its area, diminished somewhat of its tragic force and vehemence.

"It was a stroke," some whispered. "She fell unfortunately," said others. But it never occurred to anyone that there was any connection between

Krista's death and Venik's playing, or indeed between Krista and Venik. When they asked him Venik assented "It was an unfortunate fall," he said.

Then Venik was alone in the chamber of death. At Krista's head the waxen tapers were burning, and they and Venik were the only watchers. And here Venik looked musingly at those well-loved features. Ah! how like they were to their living self—how fair they were and the lips scarce cold, as though they might yet move in speech. It was not like the sleep of death, it was not like sleep at all. But just as though she had closed her eyes in sportive jest and pursed her lips together to simulate an easy slumber, and could throw away the mask and thaw the wells of speech whenever she chose.

Venik seemed to see her once again on her couch of leaves and moss within the hollow tree. His hand had strewn the couch of leaves and moss in the old days—the couch from which she fled so faithlessly. And his hand also had strewn the couch on which she lay to-day, but she was not truant now.

Then Venik questioned the shade of her—the lost one. "Krista why didst thou desert me in the old days?" But Krista's lips were mute and her shadow answered not, and on her face she smiled the same cold smile. And Venik's tongue faltered his reproaches—"Only once in the old days thou

didst desert me." But the dead Krista treated both his questions and his repinings with the same icy calm and smiled the same cold smile which froze the life blood within him.

And he gazed at the fair fair corpse again and sighed and wondered. "Was it to sleep thus in fruitless beauty on a gilded couch and silken cushions that thou didst leave so recklessly my couch of moss and leaves."

And then Venik whispered to himself that he would carry her away by stealth and lay her on the couch of moss and leaves and that perhaps she would awaken—perhaps she would rise once more. And then he thought that it would be easier to go to the hollow tree, bring away the leaves and moss, and strew it here, and then perhaps she might awaken. But, however he planned and plotted, Krista treated all his day dreams with the same icy calm and smiled the same cold smile as though she wished to say, "I am contented with everything thou dost," or again, just as though she said, "Fool, fool, all is over, I am well cared for now."

Then Krista in that calm unnatural repose was such a riddle to him that he turned away and vowed that he would strive to unriddle it no more. He turned away and taking his violin in his hand examined it all over inch by inch to see where lay that secret source whence had issued words so shrewdly tempered that they had smitten Krista to

the death, and then as if to solve the secret his fingers closed idly round the bow and he swept it gently across the strings. But only as though he coaxed and stroked them lest they should utter their words of death anew, only just as Krista had done that night when stepping to the window and gazing at the evening star, she had sung half whispering, half aloud "The orphaned child."

And Venik too stepped to that open window and looked toward the heaven, looked well nigh in the same direction as did Krista ere death had robbed her of the light for ever. And his strings sighed out in whispers "The orphaned child." Did Krista listen as she used to listen in the old days? He turned to look at her once more and she smiled as smoothly as before and seemed to say, "I know all, but what of that." She took all his questionings and all his musings so lightly that his questions died away upon his lips.

Then he stroked her hair just as in the old days he had stroked it by the streamlet under the willows when the cuckoo cuckooed to them, and Krista smiled placidly even at this and seemed to say "How soft your hand is." And he kissed her eyeballs but now no salt tears oozed from under the heavy eyelids, and he kissed her on the mouth but now alas! it chilled all kissing that fell upon it. And do what he would Krista repulsed him not, at everything she only smiled, to everything she made

but one response, "I am contented with everything thou dost."

She smiled the same cold smile whatever Venik did or thought. Be it subtle questioning, be it doubting, be it the outpouring of affliction—for it all she had but one cold smile.

Then he took his violin into his hands again and turning towards Krista with it he said "A little while ago these strings breathed life, now only the icy wind of death streams from them. Oh! Krista a little while ago they charmed thee to my side, now they have murdered thee and driven thee away for ever." And Krista ever smiled the same cold smile.

And she still smiled when they brought her coffin and when they laid her to rest in it on a bed of flowers. And when the singers came with whom in times gone by she had wrought her audience to a frenzy of delight, and when above her pealed the funeral dirge its last farewell she smiled the same cold smile. And she smiled when priests came and above her coffin pattered prayers which sounded already like the rattling of the clods of earth upon its lid. And still she smiled when the lid was laid upon the coffin, even when that lid had all but closed upon her, even when in one last lingering gleam the light of this world died away into eternal darkness. The lid concealed her face and concealed her smile. And Venik in spirit saw her still smile

on, even in the coffin, even in the carriage in which they laid her.

Now when he saw the horses gird to and move away with her he would gladly have unyoked them and himself drawn Krista to her burial. Now it seemed a shameful thing to leave it to horses to draw her to her last resting place, just as in her hour of triumph it had seemed a shameful thing that the people should yoke themselves to her car. The people paced behind her coffin. There was a countless multitude and Venik was but one of them, and felt the oppressive presence of that crowd. Oh ! that he could have carried Krista far away with no one by—carried her away wherever he chose, free from the curious gaze of the inquisitive and where he might vent the anguish of his soul alone.

But in all that multitude sorrow was but a forced unnatural plant. It was but the mere semblance of sorrow and struck no deep root.

That was soon apparent. By the time the procession reached the barriers of the city all but a very few of the mourners had slunk away and ere the earth was well nigh shovelled over the coffin all were gone but he and two or three gravediggers. Then even the gravediggers departed and Venik remained alone. And here beside the grave it seemed as if he talked once more with Krista, as if the bonds of sorrow were loosened and as if even in the midst of bitter anguish he was himself once more.

He stayed long beside the grave and paid his sad court there several days—its living monument. And at evening he went to Krista's previous dwelling and looked long and wistfully at the yet open casement. But from that casement no one now looked forth either into the street or toward the sky or toward the star.

Then it seemed to Venik as though the book of fate was closed and all was accomplished, he quitted Prague, aimed straight for home, and came one evening to the hillside, beneath which flowed the river and on which stood the hollow tree at the outskirts of the old oak wood.





CHAPTER VII.

IN the old oak tree was yet strewed the couch of moss and leaves. He laid himself down to rest upon it and was utterly alone. And now even his thoughts had no basis in reality. He began to smile vacantly at everything just as Krista had.

And a strange numbness stole upon him, and though it was a warm summer's evening, winter seemed to close in around him.

And the birds sang now no more their carol of the spring, the tuneful stream was stayed, the full voiced choir was hushed, only from time to time they piped a dreary call-note as if to tell the world they still were there. And then when Venik took into his hand his violin it seemed as though, like the song of those birds, the melody had vanished from its strings. The tale he had to tell upon them was already told, his joy had throbbed itself out upon them, his grief had sobbed itself to rest upon them, and now he scarcely knew what had come over them. Already they held but empty tones, already their melody had ceased to speak.

The river hummed its old perpetual song and above the neighbouring village, his home and birth-place, the sleep of dreams descended. And fitful slumber seemed to flap about the hollow tree and to mock and gibe at Venik.

But perhaps only that aged tree understood the deep delight of slumber. Venik crept out of it and then he began again to muse and speculate and question within himself, whether all must be that had been, and whether there was not some power in nature to efface and roll back the past. And his own soul answered him that all must be as it was and that he and Krista had understood one another at last. Krista had always smiled and smiled, and still she smiled even in the earth.

Then it seemed strange to him that he and Krista, who had grown up together like folded leaves upon a single bough, should have diverged so far from one another, that one could neither see nor touch the other ; or they were like two mountains set side by side—for half their height they were like one single growth, for the other half their summits grew wider and wider apart, and never more encountered, or only when the snow wreath and the tempest swept over them, and one summit sent its message to the other on the wings of the lightning. Thus he had sent his message to Krista on the wings of the lightening, and it had stricken her to death.

And he began to feel oppressed within that hollow tree, or perhaps it oppressed him to be on that couch of leaves and moss, which now so vainly began to be a couch. He laid himself down before the tree just on the spot where in the old days he and Krista had buried his mother, that is to say, the sweet briar and the willow wands and the sweet marjoram, and out of it had made his mother. And here on that little tomb he felt more at peace.

And it was just as if he saw and heard around him everything that he saw and heard here in yonder distant past, when here he shepherded the sheep.

There stood the little Krista, whose piping treble sang the gloria to his violin, and who wept because he chased her from him, and because she was a poor orphaned girl.

And he began anew to smile vacantly at everything, just, ah! just as he had seen the dead Krista coldly smile.

And then a cuckoo cuckooed and its note rang lonely through that lonely wood, where now but few birds sang, rang out as if in witness of a desolate world, and as if it tolled a dirge of endless woe. "Ah! ha! thou hast scarce anyone to whom to cuckoo now," said Venik, and smiled to himself thereat.

Then a bat flew out and fluttered round the tree, just as if it sought something.

And Venik smiled tauntingly and said, "Brother mine, seek." Then he perceived that there were two bats and that they had found one another, and in the tree a piping from a nest of young bats made itself heard. And after this Venik said, "Ha! ha! how fares it with the young vampires, how fares it with the young vampires?" And again he added, "I also am but a hollow tree."

Then he began to look to the horizon and saw the river glittering dead white below him, and above him a wan firmament and wan stars. And again his eyes looked deep into those star-depths, and far away in that direction whither Krista's eyes had strayed, and he began to murmur fitful snatches of melody.

The hillside and his life upon it began to skip about in his memory, like the *ignes fatui* of the night. And thus, too, wildly rose and fell his snatches of wild melody.

Then he said to himself, "What is it all worth? When chill autumn comes, the birds must hie away away home!"

And he felt the chill winter round him once again. And once again he peered into the tree, at the couch of moss and leaves and said, "What shall I do with thee?"

And he arose and gathered up about half of the leaves and moss. "Thou shalt smile too," he said, and made a fire of it. All was winter in his heart, and he warmed himself and smiled inanely and said

to himself, "it was a merry bout to warm himself at Krista's couch." Then he patted down the leaves and moss and added more fuel until he made a roaring bonfire of it, and it burnt higher and higher and crackled and smiled as he had said. And he smiled too. And there was yet merrier sport to come: for the old hollow tree took fire from the bonfire and burnt like a gigantic fiery column, scattering sparks in all directions. The whole horizon was aflame, the smoke stretched ruddy to the firmament, and Venik thought the sport grew merrier, and merrier so that now everything smiled upon him, even the whole world.

Then he took his violin once again for the last time, and played just as if he had gathered all the dust of life into a single pinch and would scatter it to the winds by the vibrations of his instrument.

The hollow tree was a gorgeous theatre. It shone and crackled and Venik played by its fitful glare. He played and imitated all the birds which had already fled in terror. In sooth he played feelingly and finely, just as Krista had done, when she fell in a fainting fit, and Venik smiled madly at it all.

Then in the village a bell rang out from the very chapel in which he and Krista once played and sang together. The bell rang out an alarm, and when the people from the village streamed on to the hill side, Venik was still playing underneath the tree so that it looked and all fell out just as in the old song

where the linden tree burns and its sparks fall upon the girl lying beneath it, only that here an oak tree burnt and under it was Venik.

And just as the people began to throng the hill side the hollow tree collapsed with a horrible crackling and in its embers the song of Venik was silenced. The people saw exactly how it buried him, and a shriek ran along the whole hill side as if from a single throat.

The family of the bats fluttered round. Then all burnt out, all was extinguished, all was silenced, the music of two human lives was hushed and on the face of death the smile was turned to stone.

The hollow tree, Krista's couch, Venik, the violin—all was one cinder.



Selections from Halek's Evening Songs.



Selections from Halek's Evening Songs.

Translated from the Czech.

I.

I AM that knight of fairy lore
Who rode so boldly into the world,
To see the maiden whose beauty
Like a rose on its bush is unfurled.

And they said that who so beheld her
With an endless curse was opprest,
Either changed to a stony statue
Or his heart torn out of his breast.

But I thought in my pride and madness
Some haply escape sometimes,
Forth rode I, and, for my presumption,
Am changed to a rhymers of rhymes.

II.

All on earth is lapped in slumber,
All save the heart in my breast ;
Tell me Lord of the firmament
Why hath that heart no rest.

This world so divine is silent all,
All save my heart that throbbeth ever,
Tell me Lord of the firmament
Why doth it tire never.

Thought is lulled to rest on the lap of slumber,
Day and night alternate watch are keeping,
But the heart true guardian of love eternal,
Throbs on for ever unsleeping.

III.

The brightness of the sun at noon,
That is my love to thee,
And night fair shadow of the day,
Thy silent love for me.

Thou lit'st in me a fire as hot,
As burns earth's central zone,
But now that fire unfed by thee,
Feeds on itself alone.

I thought with thee on love to feast,
Now crumbs are all my share,
What wonder if in lonely grief,
My face is shrunk with care.

But human hearts can suffer much,
And sickness tames their might,
And I, i' faith, can scarcely say,
If mine be day or night.

Thus is it writ. And day and night
Eternally are fleeting,
And only one brief kiss is theirs,
In twilight's hour of meeting.

IV.

What boots it that yon nightingale,
So sweetly sings to me love,
When this estranged heart of mine,
Dallies alone with thee love.

Ah! were his song that charms the sense,
The sweetest 'ere created,
What boots it—when my soul with thee,
And thy sweet soul is sated.

Ah! little mortal man suspects,
How sweet 'tis thus to' adore thee,
I'd drag the stars from heaven for thee,
And sell my soul, love, for thee.

V.

It seemed to me that thou wert dead,
I heard the death knell tolling,
And through the air a voice of woe
And lamentation rolling.

How strange a couch they strewed thee there,
A stone the coverlid,
And bade me write a verse thereon
In memory of thy shade.

Oh ! people ! people ! hearts of stone,
Here take my heart among you,
Be graven on the funeral slab,
What yet I have not sung you.

My living love ye trusted not,
My words were for your jeering,
Now shall the stones cry out on you,
And win my words a hearing.

VI.

When to the earth I yield my dust,
My soul to God from whom it came,
I pray that I may buried be,
As best befits a poet's fame.

Around my brows the laurel wreath,
And lodge the lyre within my hands,
That my new neighbours well may know,
Who entereth last their silent lands.

Sacred to me my lyre hath been, !
And not the plaything of an hour,
Then let it rest upon my breast,
When death's long shadows lower.

And when it irks us in the grave,
I'll wreath a song around their heart,
And sing them songs of such delight,
The dead to life shall start.

But if ye living idly dream,
The good that's ne'er accomplish'd
I'll rouse the dead against you, ay !
I'll wake the living with the dead !

VII.

Ye little birds upon the tree,
Whose very dreams are song,
Which of you thinks of me, your friend,
Who dies of cruel wrong.

Thou little moon ride high in heaven,
I hail thee for my brother,
My passion's beam is chill as thine,
We suit with one another.

The last faint flickering warmth is quenched,
And only words remain,
Yet, could I fan them into life,
I'd live my griefs again.

VIII.

Ah ! marvel not if thou should'st hear,
The birds sing songs of thee love,
Since once they came at eventide,
To hear and look on me love.

And once they came and yet again,
As to an elder brother,
For I am free as they and we,
Are kin to one another.

And many a song I sang of thee,
Songs full of love and passion,
To which those small birds tuned their throat,
And sang them in their fashion.

So when I visited the copse,
Where those sweet birds were singing,
I marvelled much to hear the grove,
With my own love notes ringing.

IX.

Your arm about some supple waist,
To thread the waltz—what joyous pleasure !
Come, pale-face, join the dance with us,
I'll bid them play a measure.

But pale-face shivered e'en as though
Chill frost was o'er his limbs congealing,
And o'er that pale wan face of his,
I saw the hot tears stealing.

X.

The greatest hero is not he,
Who being struck returns the blow,
But he is great who, though deceived,
Will not his faith forego.

He never knew love's holiest flame,
Who dares her sacred shrine defame,
Love learns forgiveness unto men,
And, cursed, curseth not again.

Who cannot sacrifice himself,
Shall ne'er to love's pure empire rise,
And false the priest who loveth self,
More than the sacrifice.

Ah ! sweetheart taught by thee to love,
Earth's joys I'd give e'en heaven above,
Meek as the lamb submissive dies,
If love demand the sacrifice.

XI.

Spring flutters home from far away,
And nature's children touched with longing,
Woke from their long, long winter's dream,
To meet the sun are thronging.

The chaffinch flutters from the nest,
Fresh children from their cottage sally,
And varied flowerets on the lees,
Scent all the neighbouring valley.

Bursts forth the leaf upon the bough,
And from the young bird's throat are ringing,
The first shy notes, and in young hearts,
The germs of love are springing.

XII.

I am like the tufted linden,
All in gala dress arrayed,
Thou art the lovely rose of May,
Come seat thee in my shade.

Here every leaf is breathing sweetly,
Here the buzzing swarm resorts,
Hither fly the birds at even,
And the birds they are my thoughts.

And far away, away they fly,
As children from their home they flee,
But they will fly away no more,
When thou seat'st thyself by me.

XIII.

Full oft I think—so oft as e'er
I press thy heart to me love,
That thou for me alone art here
On earth, and I for thee love.

'Tis hard to journey in the world,
And never be benighted,
And the best bliss on earth is this,
When kindred hearts are plighted.

And hath the king his coronal,
And God his heaven above,
The little bird his bower of spring,
Oh! I have thee my love.

XIV.

Come, sweetheart, 'tis the very hour,
For holiest prayer on bended knee,
The moon is rising o'er the tower,
Time flies—oh ! loved one come to me.

Nay, do not clasp thy hands, my sweet,
But clasp me love as I clasp thee,
And 'stead of hands—two hearts shall meet,
In prayer to heaven eternally.

Be lip to lip, love, thine to mine,
That from one mouth our prayers may rise,
I'll breath the words, dear, into thine,
Thy breath shall waft them to the skies.

And thus our mutual prayer shall rise,
The purest truest sacrifice,
For thus united seraphs raise,
Eternal prayer, eternal praise.

XV.

Fair, passing fair, my Lord, is all
In love that's o'er us beaming,
All lives for love and would dissolve,
In love's poetic dreaming.

Yon cloudlet hastening o'er the skies,
Love's messenger is wending,
The bird that's dozing on the bough,
Still dreams of love unending.

Man here on earth, till death shall bow
His head—'tis love supplieth
The theme of all his joys and tears,
For love he lives and dieth.

Ay ! heavenly angels when from harps
Of gold their songs are springing,
What could they sing of, being forbade
Love's music for their singing.

XVI.

To Paradise God summoned me,
There to learn songs of heavenly might,
'Tis ill for man alone to be,
And God formed Eve for my delight.

No rib he chose from out my side,
My very heart he did divide,
And therefore doth this heart of mine,
So fondly nestle, love, to thine.

And therefore yearning s passing strange,
Are lodged within this heart so lone,
As tho' 'twere fain our hearts again,
Should grow together into one.

And therefore when afar I roam,
My feet unbidden turn to home,
And 'stead of blood this heart supplies,
Only the tear drop to my eyes.

XVII.

Thine eye is a beautiful lake, lady,
That glitters all bright in the gloaming,
In it bathes the fond light of the stars of the night,
Of the stars in the azure sky roaming.

And 'tis clear as the crystal of ice, lady,
And its depths are transparent as ether,
Youth gaze not too deep tho' the sea seem asleep,
There are many lie buried beneath her,

XVIII.

Come sweetheart and sit beside me,
With my arms let me enshroud thee,
With a spirit as fair as an angel's
Out of heaven, hath God endowed thee.

And oft I would make confession,
And give thee some secret token
But the words, like a corpse in the grave enclosed,
Remain by my lips unspoken.

And what I so oft would tell thee,
Oh! no syllables can spell it,
My spirit is full of it,
But my lips refuse to tell it.

But when my spirit melts in thine
And heart unto heart is pressing,
Oh! then methinks that thou knowest all
That I would be confessing.

XIX.

If all the sweet delights of life
Should turn to dreary slaving,
And only love were left to cheer
Still life were worth the having.

If truth were everything on earth
And love were only dreaming,
I'd shun this waking life and plunge
In dreams were love was beaming.

And granted it were all a dream
Still ever I'd remember,
That sweet fond dream, that shed a beam,
O'er waking life's November.

XX.

Dark as is heaven's blue azure vault
So golden is the starlight,
Strange fancies fill the heart of him
Who gazes on that far light

Of star dust eddying far and far
Beyond the range of seeing,
Where yet not one small star reveals
The secret of its being.

Only when in two virgin hearts
Love's earliest breath is breathing,
Yon heaven, 'tis said, another star
Among her orbs is wreathing.

And if in one of those two hearts
Untimely fades love's blossom,
Also a golden star falls prone
From heaven's eternal bosom.

XXI.

That birdie that sings in the tree
As himself were the song that he singeth,—
Hearts wonder not that he so sings
Where love's divine harmony springeth.

Oh ! that bird he so sings from the heart
To the heart of the hearer believe it,
He might force e'en a mortal to weep
With a heart that's attuned to receive it.

And methinks that his plaintive refrain
To my own songs is closely related,
For this the light foam of my lyre
Is only a dirge iterated.

XXII.

What silence reigns around as when
A dream o'er weary eyes descends,
As when the bird in downy nest
Her callow offspring tends.

So gently might her pinions fold
Above the star bespangled skies,
And haply many a heart shall gain
What carking day denies.

And haply many a heart shall win
What envious earth no more may give,
And kindly dreams make real the gleams
That scarce in memory live.

XXIII.

I tried to think how life would be
Were love from this world banished,
Earth would be but a naked waste
Whence every flower had vanished.

The heart would wander through the world
Till canker care decayed it,
And gloomier than this world itself
'Ere God in light arrayed it.

So gloomy that terrestrial man
Would loath the earth he cherished,
And God himself would abdicate
A heaven where love had perished.

XXIV.

Fair was the night and transparent,
You might look into heaven's portals,
And the scent and the song and the murmur,
Enchanted the hearts of mortals.

Alas ! that thou wert not beside me
To list, love, beside me staying,
How the oak leaves whisper together,
And the wind with the woodbine is playing.

How the universe is but a song
From the bosom of nature springing,
And how weak is the echo in human hearts
Of the star music round us ringing.

XXV.

Those stars who scattered through the sky
With their own beauty strew it,
Look fondly down as they would fain
Have called me to it.

Ah! no ye little twinkling stars
Yours be the circling heaven,
Dearer to me this earth—its joys
And woes—earth's leaven.

Ye have no notion, 'loved stars,
Through your chill ether racing,
How fair a heaven unfolds o'er earth
At love's embracing.

XXVI.

I know not whether it were dream or no,
But still in memory linger night's creations,
How on the judgment page of God I gazed
And read the fate of nations.

Thoughts weighty as the mind of God himself
Above his head a hundredfold were streaming,
And beauteous as a star-lit night of spring
O'er his fair body gleaming.

Many a thought—the germ of a whole world—
And many like some song of gentlest being,
Many—the history of a coming race—
Still hid from human seeing.

There, too, I found the type of my own passion,
And thy sweet heart with every charm invested.
There, too, our mutual loves in heaven's pure ray
Like two bright cloudlets rested.

And on this love of ours the Lord divine
Looked kind and fondly from his throne of glory.
And choirs of youthful angels ranged around
Chanted its simple story.

XXVII.

All ye who labour sore oppress,
Come unto me to compass rest,
Here from your loins the burden loose,
And quench the spring of sorrows sluice.

Love's empire I establish here,
Where heart meets heart in friendship dear,
And what so grief the spirit tries,
Shall melt in heavenly harmonies.

Here envy shall revenge forego,
And speech in sweetest song shall flow,
Here, lions modify their throat,
And harpies stock the pigeon cote.

Here, shall be balm for every sore,
Here, hearts be young for evermore,
Here, shall the rose unwithering bloom,
And harsh unkindness find no room.

XXVIII.

Two thoughts in God, as stars were set
In heaven's divine communion,
To shine of all the starry choir,
In fondest union.

Till one of them fell prone from heaven
And left its mate to languish,
Till God excused her, too, the skies
Pitying her anguish.

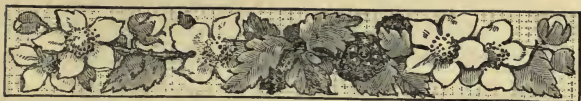
And many a night on earth they yearned—
Sad earth—for their lost Aden,
Till once again they met as men,
As youth and maiden.

And looking in each others eyes
They recognised straightway,
And lived thrice blest till heaven to rest
Called one away.

Who dying out of earth recalled
Her love to heaven's fair shore,
And God forbade it not, and now
They're stars once more.



Poldik the Scavenger.



CHAPTER I.

HEE! heesta!" (gee) shouted Poldik to his horses; he was driving with his wagon into Podskali (Undercliff) be it understood, and from there distributed throughout the city sand in summer and ice in winter.

Through summer, all through winter, and for many a long year it was the same monotonous journey to and fro. In summer he carted sand for the builders. When one house was completed, he carted for other builders perhaps in quite a different quarter of the city—that change occurred in summer. In winter when he had stocked the cellar of one brewer, he led ice to the neighbouring brewery, which was perhaps some streets distant—that change occurred in winter. Otherwise, provided the order was for the produce for the Moldau, ice and sand, he carted anywhere, his pilgrimage to the Moldau, always finishing with Myslikoff Street, thence diverging to the Zitne gasse, and finally passing the Sipkoff mills until at last it was brought to a termination at Naplavka (the Quay).

As soon as his vehicle had entered these streets, Poldik might have sat in his cart and gone to sleep ; his horses would have found their way as we say "blindfold." They knew hardly any other road. They were like the bucket of a well : we let it down one way and draw it up the same without a span breadth of difference, but always the same ; and if they had awoke some morning in any of the streets, Poldik need never have opened his lips ; they would have gone on of their own accord like automata through that portion of their circuit which was yet before them, be it to Naplavka or from Naplavka to the building steads. So perfectly familiar to them was this road that they knew instinctively where the ale-house was, where was the blacksmith's forge, where the fruit stall, and where Poldik bought his tobacco.

Very frequently they stopped at the ale-house without Poldik's bidding : and only again jogged on with the vehicle when their master tugged at the reins and said gee up or swore at them. But it also very frequently happened that their master did not tug the reins or say 'gee up' or swear at them ; but let the reins hang loose by the cart and with heavy steps slouched into the ale-house. Much the same occurred at the blacksmith's shop ; here they generally stopped of their own accord for certain, because whenever they lost a shoe Poldik swore at them then and there, and that was a sign that they would get a fresh shoe at the blacksmith's. As for

the fruit stall, Poldik only occasionally recollected this halting place, turned aside to the little booth and shouted at the door "Two." This had divers meanings according to the season of the year ; either two kreutzer's worth of cherries or pears, of plums or apples—or when there were none of these delicacies to be found at the stall—two kreutzer's worth of brandy. Here, perhaps, for the sake of completeness I ought to detail what happened at the tobacconist's. But Poldik frequently filled his pipe at the fruit stall and struck a light, and then it appeared to him that the world was better by a whole pipe of tobacco.

I do not pretend to enter into the sentiments of horses, but even Poldik's horses saw the world in a better light after these halts, because they had a moment's rest and quiet. They knew these modest stations well, and perhaps said to themselves, "There, if all be well, we shall enjoy another rest."

I paint these horses for you, though you have seen them a hundred times ; but they are indispensable for a proper understanding of my hero ; although you have seen him also a hundred times. I do not know their life-history : they may have formed part of some grand turn-out : perhaps they had once served in a campaign, perhaps they were victorious with the heroes who rode them, perhaps with the same they beat an ignominious retreat. Now, they were horses because the Lord God had created them

horses. Otherwise, they were more skeletons, with just a strip of horse's hide stretched across them for the sake of appearances, and if animals, like men, were in the habit of divesting themselves of their outer garments at night, a pair of bony frameworks would have been seen taking their rest in the stables, and might have served for a sciologist to demonstrate anatomy on. Nor did the afore-mentioned horses' hides by any means interfere with anyone who wished to compute the number of their ribs. You could do it to a hair, and see where the ribs began and where they ended, where the stomach was or rather ought to have been, where the hip bones were and similar portions, which even a painter tries to endue with a certain amount of flesh.

They were, then, bones and leather, only that even this comparison is not quite correct. Their leather was rent in many a place, particularly in the region of the ribs and hip bones where the straps frayed them; in some places it was even frayed off altogether, especially about the neck where the collar sat. At times these frayed and shabby objects tempted the fancy to divers comparisons. They looked like the seedy old sofa of some aged country parson, and only wanted a little horse hair or whatever the sofa was stuffed with to peep out from their rent hides, to make the comparison perfect. Or, again, they looked like an old sleeve of a past generation, which no longer gave any

warmth to the wearer, because all the nap was rubbed off.

These horses, then, were far removed from their prototype Pegasus—as far, indeed, as the hod-man is from the architect, or the drummer in the orchestra from the composer of the overture.

Had Apollo clapped wings on to these creatures of Poldik—had he clapped on to them the original pair of poet's wings, they would never, for all the world, have flown along Myslikoff Street—much less have taken flight above it. When they stood still and Poldik's "Cl! cl!" and his whip gave them to understand that they were to bestir themselves, you could count up a fair number of seconds before their volition imparted itself to all the harness, before the traces stretched tight, before the fore wheel got an inkling of what was toward, before the cart creaked and incited even the hind wheels to rotate, and before the whole system was in motion : horses, cart, and Poldik.

And when they were at last on the go their pace was above measure deliberate. Perhaps not even clockwork is so completely uniform, for we see clocks gain or lose. But Poldik's horses never gained a minute in a whole year, though to their praise be it added that they never lost a minute either. A sluggish, even, deliberate pace was so strong a portion of their characters that neither Poldik's whip nor his oaths caused the least variation there-

from. Poldik's whip seemed to them a necessary concomitant to their own deliberate pace; if they had missed it in certain conjunctures, and in the same conjunctures had not heard the well-known oaths, they would certainly have cried out—had they been gifted with human speech—"Why don't you crack your whip again now? why don't you swear at us again?"

An anatomist, gazing at their even, and ever sluggish pace, might have verified what muscles it was by which they extended their feet; he would have had plenty of time for this.

For their regularity of movement they were not themselves wholly to blame. They got just enough fodder to keep them in leather, and this leather held them together just enough for Poldik still at times to boast to his companions that they pulled "like clockwork." Perhaps if they had got more fodder they would have pulled like greased clockwork, but no opportunity was given to them of converting more victuals into blood and muscle; therefore we can believe that if more fodder had been placed before them, they would not have cared about it.

Poldik's own gait much resembled the pace of these dilapidated horses. By long tramping beside his vehicle, his pace had been drilled into one just as sluggish, slow, and vacillating, even on Sunday, when he no longer walked behind his vehicle, his step was no fresher nor brisker. The 'tempo' of

the previous week still maintained itself in his limbs, and he went on just as regularly as the small wheel in a watch. But inasmuch as the usual pace at which people move is considerably brisker than that of scavenger's horses, Poldik's step was uniformly shaky; every time he lifted one foot and brought it forward his body made a corresponding contortion as though he wished to take half a step backward. This shaky manner of walking was his habitual manner, and so even on Sunday when he indulged in something of a strut the upper portion of his person kept shaking and swaying as if it wished to compensate for the sluggishness of his ordinary pace.

It also sometimes came to pass that Poldik had to quicken his steps, when the horses entangled the reins or traces under their feet, when a horse lost a shoe or anything of the like nature occurred. But as soon as the affair was put to rights and the cranky vehicle moved on, Poldik remained standing and waited until the vehicle had jogged on so far that he found himself once more in his usual place. Then he felt as though he had over-exerted himself, and lapsed into his usual regular pace to rest himself. And he rested long enough.

Sometimes it would happen that he wished to have some confidential and important conversation with the scavenger who was driving the cart behind him. On these occasions he allowed his vehicle to rumble on ahead while he himself paused and waited

until the other carter caught him up. When their chat was over, Poldik had to overtake his own horses, and perhaps they might be thirty paces or thereabouts in advance. Such moments necessarily stirred both his blood and his stumps, and for thirty paces he had matters for reflection as to how he had lagged behind, how he had fatigued himself, and whether it was worth the while.

Such pauses and delays did not occur frequently. Poldik had no great need of them.

Not only was his step measured, vacillating and swaying—his whole character was equally measured vacillating and swaying. All his thoughts and conceptions were so in their inception and conclusions. It must be something of extreme importance, in fact, of absolute necessity which should cause Poldik to halt and wait for his follower and cart to catch him up and enter into conversation. In general he managed to learn what he wished to know by looks alone, and seldom had recourse to words. A whole dialogue was thus disposed of as they passed one another or trailed after one another, merely by means of glances. Thus one of his mates had a white horse that limped on Saturday. Poldik saw them again on Monday, and the white horse no longer limped. He glanced at the happy possessor of the beast, and this glance meant “the white horse has soon recovered.” The other glanced at Poldik, infused a certain smug satisfaction into his look, and this look

meant "No; he does not limp to-day," or he saw the white horse in the forenoon with one of its shoes off, and when he met it in the afternoon the shoe was still missing. Here Poldik looked at the carter, and and this look meant "It is still with one of its shoes off!" The owner of the white horse similarly replied by a look, and in it Poldik heard or saw the words "we have been very busy to-day, and really have not had time."

Poldik's regularity was shown moreover in the way he spoke to his horses. Just as if he had been laying out a road, he counted twenty Poldikian steps—and only after this precise measurement, pulled the rein, cracked the whip, and shouted "Hee!" You might wager your head it would not come one step before or after the twenty paces. Only I must except certain special occasions. On Monday when he put to the horses after their Sabbath rest he shouted 'hee!' twenty times during the first twenty steps. That was to compensate for all that had been omitted on the Sunday. And this single circumstance proves to me that he did not usually shout out in his sleep or in moments of rest and abstraction. Moreover this exclamation occurred more frequently early in the morning during the first few steps, and again in the afternoon after the midday meal.

In this Poldikian "hee!" rested a whole dictionary. Generally it was only a common-place incite-

ment to activity, pronounced clearly and pithily. But when something touched, angered, or vexed Poldik, the horses certainly became aware of the fact, for the "hee!" was forcibly expressed and sharply pronounced. Similarly, if he congratulated himself about some trifle or if he felt a bit of self-satisfaction, the horses knew it, for then the "hee!" was scarcely audible, it was only softly murmured as if spoken in a sort of a soliloquy. At such times it would happen that the horses stopped at the ale-house of their own accord. But something much out of the common way must have staggered the soul of Poldik before he prolonged the "hee!" and made of it "heesta!" Then the horses gathered themselves together and took several steps at a quicker rate, so that it was only on these occasions that, comparing them to a watch, they could be said to gain a little. But, indeed, these irregularities were so rare that they were almost lost in the distance of ages. Only to us who are Poldik's biographers, are even these irregularities matters of importance; as we shall see in the sequel.





CHAPTER II.

AND a time came when Poldik's irregularities became almost the rule.

At mid-day he stopped with his vehicle not far from Naplavka in the shadow of a lofty wall, where he and his horses celebrated the dinner hour. Having hung the oat bags to the horses muzzles, he waited for the coming of Malka.

Malka, his little neighbour, brought his dinner to him, from the same house where Poldik dwelt or rather where he and his horses just bivouacked for the night. His neighbour herself, Malka's mother, it must be understood, used to cook and bring his dinner, but when she fell sick her daughter brought it, and not till then did Poldik become aware that his neighbour had a daughter. Then this neighbour died, and Malka was crying when she brought his dinner.

Poldik could have wept with her, for under all his apparent roughness lay a tender heart. And here he was prompted to say "Poor thing." By this he meant the dead mother.

But when Malka only cried the more, he looked at her and said "Poor, poor thing, don't cry any more, it can't be helped."

When that afternoon he drove off with his sand, he felt as though all the time he had Malka's tears in his own heart, and sometimes for a score paces his throat was parched, and "hee!" remained only in 'posse,' or it stuck in his throat, and he felt as though he should cry if he succeeded in saying it. He cracked his whip moodily, and the lash curled itself round the handle like a flag round its flagstaff when the fête is over. His swearing was such that the horses could make nothing of it, and stopped continually, both at the ale-house, the blacksmith's, the fruit stall, and the tobacconist's.

When Malka came with dinner on the following day, Poldik scrutinised her while she was still in the distance to see whether she was crying. She was not crying, and consequently when she approached Poldik smiled faintly. He was hungry, and when he had half finished his dinner, he said "Malka, you are a capital cook." On this even Malka smiled faintly, and Poldik gave his horses their oats. That afternoon you might have heard Poldik's "hee" from one end of the street to the other, and he swore more in jest than in earnest, so that the horses were puzzled to know what it all meant. Even his own pace was fresher than usual, so that he overtook his vehicle and found himself walking by

the shafts, after which he halted, and with a self-conscious smirk, awaited until the cart again overtook him.

And now Malka was no longer in tears when she brought the dinner, but still Poldik always turned his eyes to meet her, and to see how she looked. Malka was sometimes already smiling in the distance, and after this it appeared to Poldik that only one person in the world could cook so well, and that his dinner tasted excellent. He did not say so, indeed, in so many words, but his looks expressed as much. When he replaced the first plate in her basket he smiled, and also smiled after the second course, and concluded with the words "You are a capital cook, Malka." Malka smiled too, but with modest downcast eyes; when she departed Poldik gave her his hand, and was long enough in saying good-bye. For once in their lives his horses got plenty of oats.

All that afternoon this incident left traces of irregularity in his gait and action, which were apparent to everyone even at a distance. His face looked as if he were still all the time munching his dinner, and praising Malka for her cooking. He kept saying "Cl! cl!" and even his "hee!" was frequently exchanged for these euphonious sounds. And when he cracked his whip it was with an air which plainly said "How proud I am to be able to crack a whip." He swore with a face that belied

the oath, and seemed to say "I really scarce know why a fellow should swear after all." And all the time his mind was occupied with Malka more than with anything else. She was for the present complete mistress of Poldik's mental economy, and he was delighted to think what roguish eyes she had, what pretty dimples when she laughed, what a fresh healthy face, in a word, that she was a girl whom anyone would turn to look at as she passed.

Afterwards it came to pass, that it was not enough to give her his hand in along good-bye, but he also greeted her with a shake of the hand when she brought the dinner, and he laughed more frequently during the meal, and said "Troth, troth, Malka, it is charming." After this he always gave his horses an extra feed of oats, so that now none of his comrades passed them without measuring them with a look which seemed to say, "Look at him! he means to turn his jades into horses still." It is true they still pulled like jades, but already they might any day have trotted away like horses.

Once, I know not by what accident, he was behind his time in driving to the mid-day halting place. Hitherto, be it understood, he had always been first with his cart at the mid-day trysting place, and it was only after he had given his horses their first feed of oats that Malka made her appearance. But owing to this delay it happened that he overtook Malka on the road, indeed in one of the

several streets which he threaded before debouching on Naplavka, and when he overtook her he said "Malka, let me give you and the dinner a lift." "He said this with a touch of pride, for it was not everyone who could say "Malka, have a lift." He took the basket out of her hands, placed it in the cart, then helped Malka to scramble up, pointed out to her how she was to sit, and drove the vehicle standing.

Lord! what a drive that was! All the time that Poldik held the reins he felt as though he was holding Malka and helping her into the cart. His features were quite playful, his eyes were quite beaming, then he confused "Hee" and "Heesta" together, smacked his whip as if he were off to the festival, and only swore when it was absolutely necessary. After which he always looked at Malka with a broad smile which seemed to enquire "There! what do you think of that now for a drive?" It was a delightful moment to him when Malka smilingly replied "Quite charming, Poldik dear, quite charming." Here at last Poldik felt that he might allow himself a certain latitude; he incited his steeds and coaxed them with "Cl" "Cl" in such a way that it put them in mind of their youthful years; so that they exchanged their sluggish pace for a fresher step, so that in places they even frisked, so that the cart bumped over the cobble stones until Poldik had to skip from one foot to the other, and Malka was

in difficulties, not knowing whether she ought to clutch the dinner basket to prevent it from being jolted out, or whether she ought to keep herself there by clutching with both hands.

It delighted Poldik beyond measure this fear of hers, which was at the same time half laughter. I do not know what the horses had to say to all that coaxing and whip cracking, but they understood it, and for the nonce shook off several years of their lives. But, indeed, even Poldik felt himself younger and scarcely remembered when he felt so young as he did that day.

Well, and when they halted not far from Naplavka (the Quay) in the shadow of the lofty wall, he actually bounded from the cart, and when he looked at Malka and her face was covered with smiles and dimples, and she said "What a ride we have had!"—Oh! then it seemed as though they must be married to-morrow morning. Finally he helped her out of the cart. Malka took his hand with much simplicity, rested her other hand on his shoulder, and giving a spring allowed herself to be lifted off her feet and placed on the ground. Poldik felt thoroughly self-satisfied, and never in his life imagined that he could have courted a girl so well.

What came to pass fortuitously to day, came to pass again on the morrow and the day after, and then for many a day. From some cause or other he always happened to overtake Malka about mid-day

in some street, settled her in the cart, drove about with her, smirked at her, urged on the horses until the cart bumped over the paving stones, and then again lifted her from the cart and took his dinner. At that time Poldik's horses fared well, so that they thought nothing of their accelerated speed. They had plainly grown rich, both in the matter of speed and their provisions for life, and displayed it in every step.

At this period, you will understand, Poldik's own feet moved brisker and were firmer planted. He was as it were on the highway to something better, and showed a touch of the dandy and of the world, though indeed any one at the first glance would have recognised his original uniformity and ponderousness latent beneath it all.

At this period it happened that once as Poldik was helping Malka from the cart, a certain chum of his passing by them grinned ironically at the couple, and enquired "and pray, when are you two going to pair off?" To this question Poldik ought to have replied with a smart repartee, and Malka with silence. But as it happened Malka replied with a laugh—indeed, a very boisterous laugh, and Poldik's blood boiled and he never answered a word, but stood agape as though he had done something amiss.

It is possible that some sprightly young lady reader has already condemned his faint-heartedness, and given it its proper appellation. I, however,

have no objection to it, and have merely to add that it never occurred to me to exhibit his character in a more favourable light than that in which it exhibited itself.

But the truth is, that though he stood agape and blushed at the question, still the question itself ran in his head. "When are you two going to pair off" continually buzzed in his mind, and every "hee," every "heesta" was the outward expression of that enquiry, every oath was a sort of a rejection of all possible obstacles, every smack of the whip was an asseveration that pair off they must. Ay, yet more. From that moment every time Poldik looked at Malka, he always saw in her that smile which had been called into existence by the original enquiry "When are you two going to pair off." Thus things evolve themselves from one another.

At that time he used to stop less frequently at the ale-house and the fruit stall. He had indeed saved and put by sundry groschen at home, but still it appeared to him that he ought to add every penny he could to what he had already scraped together, in order to have enough capital to begin housekeeping. And he saved and added and reckoned in his mind when the marriage could come off. Malka pleased him, about that there was no longer any doubt.

One Sunday she brought his dinner into the stable where his horses were stalled, and here for the first time Poldik said "And perhaps, Malka, on

Sunday we might dine together in your lodging." He thought that in saying this he had said a great deal, and that it was a consequence of that much revolved sentence "When are you two going to pair off." But any one at all versed in the expression of ideas, will agree with me that it really said very little.

Such apparently was Malka's opinion. And she replied laughingly, "What an idea, Poldik, when we are—as we are! What would people say?"

Malka said much more than Poldik had done previously, indeed she led him a good piece of the way to the goal he had in view, perhaps even farther than was becoming in so young a girl. But Poldik being, properly speaking, slow, vacillating, and indecisive in mind did not perceive that she beckoned him so far in order that he might say the word, and then that they might reach the end in view. Poldik only gathered from her reply that he was not to be admitted to her table or to eat in her company. "At present she thinks she couldn't yet" he said to himself, and then wondered when the happy hour would come. And though it was his Sunday dinner and Malka had taken particular pains with it, Poldik scarcely smiled, and scarcely praised her cookery.

When the meal was over, Malka said "Dear me, Poldicek, aren't you going anywhere this fine Sunday."

Here Poldik did smile again, for he more easily understood this immediate project.

"Malka, would you like," he said.

"I should like to have a look at Nussle or Liska (*i.e.* the Fox inn) well enough—wait just a moment till I have changed my things."

Once again Poldik thought the world fairer by a whole Sunday. Only to think that he should never have hit upon the device of inviting her to take a walk with him, and there was Malka inviting him herself! True she had excluded him from one thing, but then she had freely invited him to another. And it almost seemed to Poldik that the second thing had the greater value. What was dinner? It only lasted an instant. But an outing with her lasted the whole afternoon until evening.

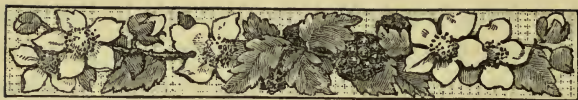
Then Malka came, and she was dressed in her best. Poldik chuckled with delight when he saw how it became her, and thought that there was none to compare with Malka. And proud he felt as he marched through the streets with her on his arm. He felt young again at her side, and he quite forgot his sluggish unsteady pace, and stepped out as if he had never tramped behind a scavenger's cart and his horses. He never could have believed himself capable of so much animation. And he felt glad when he realized that he was; and he began to love Malka more and more for that very reason.

After a time they went into some gardens, seated themselves at a table, and Poldik treated Malka.

It was beyond everything dear to him to have a being beside him who was pleased to be seated near him; and who was glad that they had gone out and were there together. Poldik looked smilingly at her as at a fair picture, and all through that afternoon he felt as if he must say continually how he loved her. But he did not say it. Indeed all he managed to force himself to say was "Well then, Malka, when are we two to pair off."

"That is for you to settle Poldik, dear," responded Malka. And here Poldik thought that he knew everything, and that he had need of nothing more in the world.





CHAPTER III.

FROM that day Poldik considered himself strictly and formally engaged to marry Malka. All the domestic arrangements which he made had a speedy marriage in view, now he ceased to think of himself that Malka also might not be too much in his thoughts ; but, of course, you know how one feels under similar circumstances.

It came to pass once at mid-day, and yet more frequently later on, that Poldik was obliged to desert the shadows of the lofty wall and drive some hundred paces further to the river side, to Naplavka. He was delighted to watch Malka with the dinner searching in vain for him in the old place, and Malka, too, was delighted when she found him at last close to the margin of the river.

Here Malka enjoyed herself vastly, and she told Poldik that he was to halt here more frequently in future for the mid-day meal under the shade of the tall poplar, for it was far pleasanter here than by that old wall yonder.

And it was pleasanter by the shore, boats laden with sand lay to, and smaller skiffs kept circling round them, and in these smaller boats were wherry-men punting about. The distant view upon the water, too, everything was better than yonder by that lofty deserted wall.

On the Quay Malka was considered in the light of Poldik's future bride, and thus many a joke passed between them and the folk there present when Poldik took his dinner from Malka's basket.

The next day Malka brought the dinner straight to the shore. And she was still more pleased with the scene than she had been the day before. I know not what called Poldik away for a moment, but in his absence Malka stole down close to the water's edge, and said half to herself "How I should like a trip on the water."

I also know not whether these words were a simple soliloquy, but they caught the ear of one of the wherry-men, who gallantly replied "Sit down in my skiff, and we will have a lark." Malka looked at him, and did not answer. Perhaps she considered the whole affair a joke. But the wherry-men understood it for earnest. "Only just a minute" said he, "before Poldik comes back we will be ashore again."

Before she expected it the little skiff lay close by the shore at Malka's feet. She need only take one step forward, and she would be afloat. The

young wherryman stood all prepared as if he were a winged being, and as if his whole attitude was an embodiment of the words "Come and let us flutter about." He was like an embodied smile, like an embodied jest. Everything in him was playful, everything in him was so full of gaiety that it was hard to resist. His eyes alone were a comedy, his words were like snatches of merry songs—Malka never meant it, and lo ! there she was sitting in his skiff.

The skiff acquired wings ; a few strokes, and it was in the middle of the river. The river smiled around them, the heavens smiled above them, when Malka looked at the young waterman he smiled, too. Everything was smiling ; Malka also was smiling.

And then they looked from the middle of the river, and watched Poldik as he slowly returned to the shore.

"Never mind" said the young waterman, "before he gets back we can yet take a look somewhere else." And again he plied the oar, and they seemed to fly along ; like a five's ball they were at Podskali, not far from Vysehrad (High burgh), and like a five's ball they were back again. And they stopped again in the middle of the river just as Poldik was returning to his vehicle which stood by the shore.

When he reached it some of the bystanders exclaimed "Your bride has eloped, Poldik, look ! yonder. Francis has carried her off," and they laughed.

Poldik looked in the direction whither the wherry-men pointed; there from the skiff Francis and Malka looked smilingly at him, and Francis shouted "Now she wishes me to tell you that she is faithless to you," and Malka shouted to the shore "Wait a minute, Poldik, dear, I will be there directly."

Poldik also laughed feebly, all laughed and joked, and so it may be concluded that they were all very merry at the Quay that noon.

Poldik waited for Malka a minute or two; but when she and Francis only dallied amid stream to tease him, he shouted "Malka, I must now be off!"

"We too," shouted Francis from the river to the bank; and he laughed, and before anyone expected it he was again pulling hard against the stream. The skiff was soon concealed behind larger craft, vanished from sight and, perhaps, was already again somewhere under Vysehrad.

Poldik still stood waiting for Malka, hoping that she might yet soon return. But she did not return, and the wherry-men began now to laugh at Poldik in earnest.

"She has taken a small outing," said one; "She wants to enjoy her freedom a little longer," "Francis is showing her the world," said another; "What matter! Francis knows the world, and he knows how to show it, too," said others again.

Such was the tenor of the observations sarcastically interchanged among the bystanders.

Here Poldik suddenly turned his vehicle round loaded with sand, and tarried no longer. When he drove away his first word was "Heesta!" His horses got a severe belabouring until at last they flung out with their hoofs, and after this Poldik discharged a whole volley of oaths. But with this volley his store of ammunition seemed to become exhausted, and a considerable portion of the road and several streets were passed, and Poldik neither swore nor smacked his whip nor cried "gee up" to his horses. He looked continually at the cobble stones as if he had lost something among them, and was now searching for it.

He had been already some time at this amusement before Francis returned with the little boat on which he had given Malka a trip. "To-morrow we must take another trip," said the young waterman to Malka when she stepped out upon the beach.

"Poldik has gone off on account of you," said the wherry-men.

"He is in a precious huff on your account," added others.

And they laughed; Malka also laughed. Malka thought that she would meet Poldik and excuse herself, but she did not meet him.

The next day Poldik halted for the dinner hour in the old place by the high wall, and there waited until Malka should bring his dinner. He had already looked eagerly on his way thither to see whether she

was following him, in order that he might give her a lift. But he did not see her, and waited a pretty long time in vain expectation of her.

Otherwise no signs of vexation were visible in him, perhaps he had slept or driven off his annoyance of yesterday.

They greeted one another, and when Malka had produced the dinner from her basket—"I am just going to have a look at the water for a minute," said she, and away she went.

Here it appeared to Poldik as if he had already dined. Whether he ate or not he himself scarcely knew, but he soon got himself and his horses under weigh without waiting until they had satisfied their hunger, threw the basket with the fragments of his meal into the cart, drove off to the beach for sand, and asked half mechanically "Where is she."

"Ask Francis when he returns with her," said one of the wherry-men who was loading his cart with sand.

Poldik asked no more nor said another word, but as he was driving off he put Malka's basket with the plates and knives and spoons on to a boat which was loaded with sand, and said generally to those on board "When Malka returns tell her I shall not require dinner to-morrow."

This speech seemed to the sandmen and wherry-men somewhat too serious to be considered a mere

matter for jest, and as jest they had hitherto looked upon all which had been enacted at the quay side.

“But, But!”—began some attempting to humour Poldik—“who would take matters so seriously all at once?”

But Poldik paid scanty attention to what they said, and vanished with his vehicle as quickly as Francis had done with the skiff on which he was giving Malka a trip.

And this time Francis and Malka were really long in returning. They must have put in somewhere or other beyond Vysehrad, otherwise wherever they had gone they could have already returned. Poldik was already a second time at the quay for sand, when the wherry-men shouted “Look, there they go!”

Poldik did not look to see who was going or where they were going—he only made haste to finish the loading of his cart before the skiff had reached the shore. And he had just finished as they lay to, and Malka stepped smiling out of the skiff, on which the jolly waterman remained smiling also. Though Malka stepped out of the skiff as quickly as she could, she did not move quickly enough to stop Poldik, who was just that instant driving off and discharging upon his horses every oath in his vocabulary like a shower of hail.

When Malka took her basket and the remains of the untasted dinner, some of the men who were

lading sand said, "Poldik wishes us to tell you that to-morrow he will not require dinner."

Malka at these words felt somewhat conscience-stricken, but she soon recovered herself when the waterman said to her "Anyhow, bring the dinner, and to-morrow we will have another trip in my skiff."

This time, at all events, Malka made every effort still to overtake Poldik; perhaps she felt that she was bound to excuse herself, even though she could not wholly exonerate herself from suspicion. But Poldik for once seemed not to be driving scavenger's horses, nor himself to wear the buskin of a scavenger—he had vanished, and there was not a trace of him.

When Poldik came home that evening Malka prepared to visit him at the stable, and there to have the quarrel out which, to tell the truth, was not yet well begun. But Poldik had no sooner covered up his horses for the night than he vanished from the stable and the house, so that not a single trace of him remained, and Malka did not tarry for him.

And when she brought dinner for Poldik on the following day, she neither found him by the high wall nor at the beach at Naplavka. 'Tis true the jolly waterman was waiting there with the skiff, and invited her with looks and words and nods and smiles to seat herself beside him, for he had long waited. But Malka turned aside, and went back through those streets in which she thought she

might perhaps meet Poldik. She did not meet him, but seeing his vehicle at the ale-house where he frequently stopped, and in which his comrades often took their half pint, she followed him into the house and placed his dinner beside him on the table.

"Pray, what do you want here," said Poldik gruffly, just as when he meant to swear at his horses.

"I am bringing dinner for you, Poldik dear," said Malka, and attempted to set all to rights with a smile.

"What is the good of bringing dinner to an ale-house," said Poldik in reply.

But Malka paying no attention to this objection, none the less placed the dinner on the table, and bade Poldik to eat.

"What is the good of bringing dinner to an ale-house," repeated Poldik gruffly, and so saying he tipped over everything that was on the table, so that Malka's proffered gift, knives, spoons, and broken crockery rolled in a pretty hash upon the floor.

Hereupon Malka had recourse to weeping, and through her tears declared that her fault did not deserve to be remembered, and that he had shamed her before everybody in the ale-house. What a rumpus he made about one little pleasure trip on the water, and when she had never been anywhere all that year, and had only gone such a little distance.

And more she said to the same effect. She added that she would go again on the water deliberately, and that Poldik had no business to take on so about it.

But to-day Poldik was quite inaccessible to reason ; when Malka said that she was going again on the water and did not go, he got up and thundered out " Well, go then at once if thou dost not wish to be made a hash of like thine own dinner."

And he spoke each word as if it was a stone. We know that Poldik seldom spoke, and that he never spoke a word more, but rather several words less than he meant. Consequently, when he pronounced these words with so much precision, there was nothing for it but to consider them meant seriously. Malka had recourse to a yet more violent flood of tears, but wasted no more words on him, and soon marched off. Those bystanders who were present in the alehouse with mine host at their head, posted themselves round Poldik, whom they generally reputed to be a man of thoroughly temperate thoughts and habits, and endeavoured by peaceful words to persuade him to reconcile himself with his mistress. " Let him sleep upon it." " Everything will soon come straight." " Things like this will occur at times." " But a man ought not to take on so." " What would matters come to, if ? " and so forth.

Poldik sat by his table, covered his features with both his horny hands and never stirred. Whether

he listened to what the bystanders, sympathizing more or less with his hard fate, said to him, I know not: but when they had ceased speaking, Poldik made no response. So that at the conclusion of those well intended words a silence occurred, such as we are accustomed to call "a torturing pause." And after that pause, the bystanders began to talk among themselves about indifferent matters, relating to their several trades or occupations; but during their indifferent remarks all kept their eyes fixed on Poldik, so that anyone at all versed in the customs of the people, who had entered the house at that moment, must have guessed that the conversation of those present was so common place and insipid, because they wished to spare him whose face was buried in his palms.

Their conversation went so to say on tiptoe, for fear of outraging that which not long before had been raging very tempestuously.

Poldik suddenly burst in upon these pacable remarks with the following monologue:—"Dotards, liars! And they tell us that God looks at the heart! He looks not at all at the heart. He allows the heart of him who hath one to be wrung from him—to be torn in pieces, and then the people flock around to laugh at those pieces as at the crucified Jesus. Yes! look at my heart! See how they pierce it—but let them torture it. All your talking is not worthy that

I should write it down on paper and then light my pipe with the paper."

At these words all present looked at one another, and pointed to their foreheads as if they would say :
" His reason has given way."





CHAPTER IV.

AFTER this scene Malka took her way to the water's side, even when Poldik so pitilessly drove her away from him. She went with a faint notion that perhaps Poldik would soon follow her there himself, and that it would be easier to come to an understanding by the water side than in the ale-house. But Poldik and cart never appeared, at least they did not appear so quickly as Malka thought they would. And when they did appear nothing more was to be seen of Malka, she was already with Francis in the skiff, and the skiff was—the Lord knows where.

For they had not by any means done with one another.

And we must say that Malka on the water recovered her spirits surprisingly soon. On the whole she liked life on the water far better than life in the street. Also, hitherto life with Francis had been far more agreeable to her than life with Poldik.

In the streets went on a monotonous, unexciting, sluggish, clattering carting of sand. Here on the water life actually acquired wings, and was swift, bird-like, and diversified. And such as the street was Poldik, and such as the water was Francis. With Poldik, before a thought got clothed in words, no brief interval of time was needed. With Francis a word was like a look. He could speak without let or stay, and never was in want of a topic. What a perfect convulsion of nature took place before Poldik managed to say that he loved her. Francis had said it to her at once without any embarrassment; he said it every moment, and repeated it continually. Compliments, which almost gave Poldik the cramp to pronounce, Francis turned off as easily as a tennis ball. What a piece of work there was before Poldik had said "He hoped they would make a pair." And lo! here the jolly waterman had said it the first time she sat in his boat, "What a pity Poldik anticipated me, else we might have made a pair."

And Francis repeated it to-day when Malka stepped into the skiff.

"But, of course, now we shall not make a pair," Malka answered, meaning, however, by this that she and Poldik would not make a pair.

"Is it possible?" looked Francis.

And thereupon Malka recounted what had taken place in the alehouse.

Francis, however, in place of one consolation had ten at least, and each one was such that it would have been sufficient by its unaided self. When Francis and Malka parted to-day they clasped hands, and Malka must consent to be on the beach early next Sunday morning. Malka gave her consent, looked forward to Sunday morning with intense longing, and when Sunday came, was standing on the beach at the trysting place, long before the appointed hour.

And then Francis came, light hearted and versatile—like his own skiff, full of smiles and bedizened in the style of our Prague dandies which everyone recognizes at the first glance. And to-day his skiff was much the same as he. Light and pliant and bedizened—with pennons and ribbons streaming—dressed out in silken kerchiefs and divers garlands—the skiff was a dandy like its owner. Malka must have been without eyes and with little good taste, if she had not been at once captivated by the whole affair. For, for whose sake was all this ornamentation? Malka was not one of those who would be unaffected by these considerations.

Fair dames and gentlemen! If any of you have already passed judgment upon Francis as a dangerous and fickle fellow, perhaps, even a Don Juan, and in like manner upon Malka as perhaps little better than his victim, I pray you be not too hasty in your decision.

Surely it was past all conception natural that Malka should at once prefer the lively eddying Moldau to the long monotonous streets of Prague. And Poldik was an embodiment of those streets of Prague, and Francis was an embodiment of the water of the Moldau. So then, two almost radically different forms of life were here opposed to one another : the regular, measured, settled streets along which with loutish steps tramped Poldik beside his cart with its raw-boned horses, Poldik heavy like his sand, from which the water fell drip, drip : and here light-heartedness and elasticity, just like the smooth and marbled surface of the Moldau over which like thought itself skimmed Francis, light hearted, transparently gay, gentle and blithesome like that water which here plashed over the yellow sand.

So that Malka's sudden desertion of Poldik and her subsequent predilection for Francis was so natural an occurrence, that I know not how many young ladies would have given proof of their constancy by not following in Malka's footsteps. The female heart, according to popular ideas, flies on wings to meet a sailor lover; if the lover be not a sailor, it goes to meet him indeed, but at a perfectly Platonic pace. And we may consider Francis more or less a sailor, at least, in so far as our Moldau justifies the comparison. No doubt a facility to captivate the female heart has also its weak side ; for a heart soon won, is also soon lost. But even

that awkward landlubber Rectitude has also his weak side, for being ill-adapted to charm the mind of woman, he is too frequently left in the lurch without a wife, in spite of all his constancy of character and his devotion to business.

Malka enjoyed herself on the water beyond measure. Wherever the light craft sped its way, people on the bank paused to gaze upon the bespangled shallop, and asked each other whoever that couple could be. It was clear in the sky above them and in the water below them, the banks were carpeted with brilliant green, and by the river side lads and lasses promenaded in their Sunday attire, and in all the innocent delights of the Sabbath. Where Malka wished, the skiff stopped; where she wished, it flew forward.

They dined together in a garden, under the broad blue sky; and here Malka already confessed to herself that there was more life in one afternoon with Francis than in all the time she had spent with Poldik.

And this afternoon delighted her more and more. They urged the boat forward against the stream, and the smiles of the whole world seemed concentrated upon them. In the villages by the river side bands of music were playing, and the tones were wafted to them lightly over the water. The boys who trooped along the banks of the river recognized Francis, who was indeed a general favourite among

them, shouted to him their salutations from a distance, and waved their caps and handkerchiefs in sign of recognition.

At one river side village they finally moored the skiff, came in a body to meet him, invited him to their village, and threatened to bar his further progress unless he stepped out among them and allowed them to dance at least one round with "that bonny lass of his."

Francis and Malka were agreeable, stepped out on to the beach and proceeded to where the band was playing, accompanied by the young men of the village. As soon as Francis made his appearance, the musicians greeted him with a flourish of trumpets, the rest of the company turned and bowed to him and danced with Malka, and unusual tokens of respect were bestowed on both. Then the music accompanied them to their shallop, and the boys sang a merry roundelay. And as they floated along, Francis lighted various coloured lanterns in the boat so that it looked like a bed of roses, flashing out into the blue mysterious depths of evening. And amid the roses dallied Francis and Malka, crowned with smiles. Above them bent the boundless star-wrought heaven, and before them in smiling eddies flowed the clear and marbled surface of the Moldau.

Francis who rowed, because they floated with the stream, had no need to stir an oar; the water itself carried them along, he and Malka might hold

each other's hands, and might look at one another and at one another's smiles.

Malka thought that never in all her life had she experienced anything so delightful as that lovely evening on the water; and in whispers she declared what she could not venture to express aloud—that she would like to linger on the water as long as the moon was shining in the heavens. And the moon shone so to speak in duplicate: it was visible high above them, and it was reflected in the Moldau, and on the water its lustre lay like molten silver. And where Francis dipped his oar, the lustre was splintered into a thousand silvery flakes and fell in sparks and silvery drops, and all the while the ripples pattered on the shore in half murmured music that yet was touchingly distinct.

If the river banks had many a charm for Malka by daylight, they had many more on such an evening as this. The margin of the river was half lost in twilight, from which emerged houses, hillocks, and in general all objects bathed in glittering whiteness. The gaze could not penetrate that mysterious twilight, and yet the eye was loath to wander from it, as though within its depths lay all that ever drew the soul and spirit to itself.

This day and this evening had such an effect upon Malka that they easily and completely expelled from her soul the image of her previous lover which, as we have observed, hung there more from habit

than from any deep spiritual necessity which would have held it there so long as life lasted. Aye ! there needed but a few such days and evenings and Malka turned away from Poldik as from an uncouth scarecrow, and as though she were flying from a ruined vault whose ceiling was overhung with spider webs ; and she turned to Francis as to some sunny spot of earth which would free her from the dismal gloom of the other.

I cannot disguise the fact that the relation of Malka to Francis was a very dangerous one, and that I might here fall into the temptation to weave a romantic story. For threads which entwine so lightly as the inclination towards one another entertained by Malka and Francis, generally are just as lightly blown asunder ; only that on one side follows merely a sentiment of vexation, on the other complete disenchantment, if not an utter dissipation of all the hopes which make a girl cling to life.

But, indeed, we have no need of any such a romance, and in the present instance it would not be true. Francis had already repeated to Malka a hundred times that they should live together as a happy couple, man and wife, and Malka, when he said it, had a hundred times pressed his hand, as if in token of her consent. And then they had said it to each other in looks and kisses, and then a time came when neither looks nor kisses were needed to express it, for it was so firmly fixed and settled

between them that they saw it as clearly as they saw the path along which they paced together.

Thus then it came to pass that in Podskali the sandsmen and the boatmen prepared for the nuptial day of Francis and Malka. They discussed it a whole week beforehand on the quay, and were planning for a whole week how to celebrate the happy event. For Francis had always been to them like their own soul ; in summer on the skiffs and on the boats, in the winter on the ice where he selected and set in order and superintended the skating rinks over which he himself sped along like the fickle wind over field and fish pond. For this reason people had prophesied but last summer that all his life long he would never marry, for that he was too free and joyous-hearted, too like the wind and too inconstant, and that any woman who was his wife would doom herself to a truly thorny path. And now Francis was to marry.

Thus then, all the sandsmen and boatmen clubbed together and agreed as to the manner in which they were to spend the festive evening. The preparations for that evening might be heard discussed on the river bank, on the water, and wherever people were engaged at their work. Only when Francis came to the quay these discussions about the preparation for the day tacitly dropped.

But still Poldik heard all that was being prepared. However, he already treated the matter, or

affected to treat it as something wholly alien from himself, but none the less it stung him to the heart, and in his heart he felt as though a red hot iron was piercing his very bosom. According to his own maxim, however, he would not have given a pipe of tobacco for Francis ; but yet none but Francis was with her ; somehow or other he managed to hold his own with Malka and to retain her always by his side. And the superior ability displayed by Francis in these respects was perhaps the most galling thing of all.

Thus the day drew near when Francis and Malka were to be plighted, and the evening drew near when in their honour was prepared on the upper Moldau a festival of unusual splendour and seldom seen thereon.

Just as on that eventful Sunday morning when Malka and Francis first sailed out together, his boat was tricked out like a dandy, and in the evening glittered with divers lanterns that looked like roses ; so, to-day, all the skiffs which were in Podskali were gaily bedizened and awaited in thick array until evening brought the happy pair among them. Scarcely had the first shadows descended upon the water, when all the skiffs glowed as it were with one single fire, distributed in a thousand different fragments. The glow broadened far over the river banks, spanned the whole smooth surface of the Moldau, and shot its varied streams of light far into the star bespangled skies.

And in the midst of it all sat Francis and Malka, a newly married couple.

The skiffs—as though they had been a single large vessel—crept slowly against the stream until they reached Vysehrad, until even those ancient walls and that ancient crag were tinged by the glow from the water, and looked like a stern face with a young smile on it. Immediately after this the compact body of boats fell to pieces, each skiff rode over the water by itself, and all circled round the exquisitely adorned skiff of the young married couple. On some of the skiffs music burst forth, on others singing and music succeeded one another, on all reigned mirth and jollity, on all the crews shouted with delight, kindled torches and waved them in the air. The Moldau was so animated and bedizened that it was no longer like itself. And it was all because Francis had married Malka.

The banks were well nigh trodden down by the crowds of townsfolk who had come to feast their eyes on the agreeable spectacle. Even Poldik was amongst them, lost in the throng and unobserved. And at times it seemed to him that it would be best if he were to stab himself to the heart with something, then again if he were to stab to the heart all those yonder who made merry, and then finally it appeared to him that he deserved that taunting laughter in which accorded the people, the Moldau, and the heavens that bent above them, and then

finally it seemed to him that he had deserved yet worse things than that taunting laughter in which the festival found tongue : and that all together ought to lift him above their heads and point the finger at him, and shout "Pelt him ! because he does not know what life is ! Pelt him ! for he does not deserve to live." And then again he seemed to see the cause of it all in that jostling mob, and home he reeled like one half crazed.





CHAPTER V.

POLDIK'S horses found themselves best off while the passion of their master for Malka was on the increase until it reached its climacteric.

In those days Poldik was glad to draw rein from time to time, and took care of his horses both in the streets and at home, in order that he might be able to boast of them as his property, and mainly in order that he might jog along with them when Malka sat beside him in his cart. At that time Poldik's horses were on the high road to transfiguration. Their ribs began to be cased in a light coating of flesh, their ears sometimes pricked, and their shoes made a deeper dint upon the ground. And Poldik's comrades when they met him, looked at him with a pair of eyes in which were legible the words "Poldik is becoming quite a skilful groom."

Here we must note in passing that Poldik occasionally took to horse doctoring, and that when he took pains with the horses, he generally succeeded.

Thus, for example. If some scavenger's jade broke down, and its master half determined to take it to the knacker's yard, it still occurred to him, "Suppose I let Poldik try his hand with her." From Poldik's then two paths led, either the jade was converted into a passable mare, in which case the owner reclaimed his property; or she failed to mend, and the knacker came for her. Poldik generally "mended" his horses at daybreak or evening, when his day's work was over; and on Sunday, when he had the whole day to himself, he led out his troop into the courtyard in order to make up his mind what further he should do with them.

That troop of horses was a wonderful spectacle, and would have suited Falstaff's ragged battalion to a nicety, if, that is to say, it had been required to turn his ragged infantry into cavalry of the same kidney. One horse would, perhaps, be altogether swaddled in blankets, another would have all one side encrusted with a kind of tetter or scab, another only the shoulders thus encrusted, a third only its fore feet, another only one foot. It was just as if a sculptor had formed model horses of clay and these horses had been transformed into living samples: it was hard to decide whether there was more clay or more horseflesh as yet in their composition.

This Sunday parade in the courtyard attracted plenty of spectators. First came the owners of the

animals whose lives and, perhaps, sufferings Poldik prolonged: after them came plenty of a second public—the true spectators. Poldik paraded his invalids in the court yard, just as a circus master parades his trained stud in the arena. It must not be supposed that these convalescents performed, at Poldik's bidding, wonders comparable with the wondrous feats of strength performed in the arena by their fellows of the circus. But still, relatively, they performed wonders, and perhaps in this respect even much greater ones. For, if in the previous week a horse had scarcely limped hither, and if, the week after, that is on the second Sunday's parade, it could go a certain pace, sometimes at a brisk pace, although you could still see on which foot it limped, it had in that week relatively done a great deal; so much so that even then it found a public who were disposed to admire its agility.

But this occupation of Poldik's was quite a secondary one. Like a true artist, he only devoted himself to it when the fit was on him. And thus also it came to pass that the owner of some jade might lead her to Poldik, but afterwards drive her off again straight to the knacker's yard, and for this reason—because Poldik would not receive the horse. "I don't take in horses" he would say. "Pray who would think of taking in horses to cure." And sometimes, on the other hand, he received every horse that came, paraded them about the courtyard

to see what progress they were making, and when they were cured despatched them to their respective masters.

There were golden times in store for Poldik's horses after Malka had broken faith with him. That spurt of briskness which they had found so tiresome was soon expended—and from horses they quickly sank again into jades. Poldik had no longer anyone to whom he could boast of them, and he was angry with himself for ever having been so possessed and for having given himself so much trouble with them. They fell once more into their old measured pacing along the streets of Prague, and nothing again aroused them from their ordinary shambling walk.

But after Malka and Francis were espoused with so much pomp and ceremony, Poldik could not any longer bear to see his horses and cart. He had sufficiently clear insight to perceive what an unequal contest he had waged as a scavenger with Francis the wherryman. Nor was it the fault of his intellect that he had lost, but of the common-place loutishness with which he was saturated through and through. It appeared to him that there was nothing more despicable than his own employment; at all events he himself despised it utterly; and at that time if he could have driven off his cart and the horses along with it on to some red hot rock, so that no vestige of them might remain, he would have done it without a moment's reflection.

At that time he lost all hold on realities and certainty. His horses must have been in a maze of difficulties. He began according to entirely different methods, and anyone who had known his previous methods must have admitted that the new methods were none at all. What cared he now for twenty paces? What cared he now at what point he said "he!" "heesta!" at what point he said "Cl" "Cl," at what point he shouted "Whoa up," when he was to belabour them with the whip and when he was to swear? He mixed and tangled all his vocabulary in careless confusion, swore where he ought to have said "heesta!" flogged where he ought to have sworn, and said "Cl" where the horses expected the lash. Now they never dared to halt of their own accord, for then he let fly at them all at once a volley of all the abusive epithets which he had in his pate, just as when wind, thunder, and raindrops come down pell mell together. The horses now walked past the alehouse and the tobacconist and the fruit stall and the other noteworthy snuggeries in those quarters as though they were demented—they had unlearned the habit of halting and were only thankful when they had got through the day with a whole skin.

Hence, once more the connoisseur and the tyro in horseflesh might count their ribs and could say from their coat of hair how far the straps were to blame and how far the collar was at fault. Perhaps

Poldik did not in the least perceive whither his horses were fast hastening, and that he might have driven them off any day to the knacker's yard.

Once, however, an acquaintance gave him a hint about the matter. Going past Poldik he halted and said with slow precision, "They are no longer what they were!"

Poldik himself looked at them and almost started aghast. "They are no longer what they were" said he to himself, and here he began to pity the horses from his heart.

If Poldik had not been Poldik he would have led them home to his own stable, but now he began to consider whether he might not as well take them to the knacker's. And yet to do so seemed to him like smiting his own self and his own existence.

In the end, he led them to his own stable, ceased to be a scavenger and began business as a stableman. As soon as the news spread that Poldik had again taken to converting unsound horses into sound ones he had visitors from morning till evening, bringing him patients from all quarters, and Poldik received them so long as he had any stall room left. At that time if he had thrown himself energetically into his business, he might have made quite a fortune, and yet Poldik did not feel himself a happy man. It was a business which so completely ran counter to all his previous habits and so changed his step, his gait, and all his modes of life that he

was long in doubt whether he would not again quit it and once more throw in his lot with the scavengers.

But after all he remained constant to his new profession ; for having after no long time converted his own screws into decent horses he happened to sell them speedily and well and it was just as if he had bartered his own soul. Rather than accustom himself to a new pair of horses and teach them to learn his habits, he would have quitted this tedious life below ; and to think, too, that he would have to drive down to the quay and among the wherry-men, and that Francis with Malka perhaps by his side would be there, and that he would see the sneer upon their faces. When he thought of all this he was glad that he need go no longer to the quay, and here-upon, like a doctor, he went his rounds, visited all his patients, felt himself a new man, and was at peace.

We have already said that Poldik only practised his horse doctoring when he felt inclined. But now this inclination continued unchecked, and, consequently, he had almost become a real professional. By the end of the year, or at most two summers, he had amassed a considerable sum of money, so that no scavenger in the town could compare with him. Poldik, had he been a scavenger all his life, would never have attained so independent a position.

Then when his affairs began to succeed beyond his fondest expectation, they began also to be a

burden to him ; wherever he looked he saw the divine benediction ; but with it all to be alone in the world was a grievous trial to him.

Here, no doubt, the inexperienced reader will be inclined to exclaim, " Ah, ha ! the writer is trying to find a new bride for him." He is not doing so my dear reader—all thoughts of wedlock Poldik had now banished from his mind for ever. He would rather have stabbed himself with the first knife which came to his hand than have said again to any female, " When shall we two pair off." From that side he was as completely cured as those horses of his which he possessed no longer ; and if a new saint had been required for the calendar, whose sole qualification was to be that he now never even looked at a woman's form—Poldik might have applied for the place and have been canonized forthwith.

But a new and somewhat curious idea took possession of him, in consequence of which he ceased to feel lonely and deserted. This same idea was to beg from their parents the boys and children of scavengers. When he knew that a scavenger had a son who already began to trot along beside the horses, Poldik went to the father and said, " What do you mean your son to be ? "

If the scavenger said, " What should I mean him to be ? He will be a scavenger." " Good," said Poldik, " but you might entrust him to me for a

time in order that he may learn to understand horses."

And he got the boy; for what scavenger would have refused to have his son taught such an excellent science as was Poldik's science. And as soon as Poldik got him, he said to himself, "Won!"

And, to be sure, he sedulously developed in every boy a knowledge of horses and the proper treatment of them. But none the less, and perhaps mainly, he developed a disgust of scavenging and in place of it instilled into these boys a passion for the business of wherrying sand. That was his evangelium. When they were seated in the stable he would say to the boy, "Do you still want to be a scavenger?"

"I do not want, but I must be one," said the boy. "I must! there is no such thing as must. Must take to the worst trade in the world! To drive continually along the same road among all the slatterns and be the laughing-stock of everybody. They look at your horses—and laugh; they look at yourself—and laugh. The horse is a sorry jade—you are the same—all the spavined cattle belonging to a scavenger's cart are sorry jades. And whenever you want to marry you will find that no one will care to give you his daughter. They had rather yoke her to your cart; that's what they'll say. But a wherryman! faith! that is something quite different. You spin along over the water and the whole world smiles upon you. Be a wherryman!"

And the following day he again enquired, "Do you still want to be a scavenger?" "What's the good of asking me," said the boy, "I had much rather be a wherryman, but I have no boat, and my parents are not likely to give me one. "Oh! ho! the boat is the difficulty, is it? Well I will buy thee a boat and all else that thou requirest."

Then he asked again the third day, "Do you still want to be a scavenger?" "No; if I can get a boat I will not be anything but a wherryman.

"So you shall get one; but if you should ever cease to be a wherryman the boat is mine." "And who would cease to be a wherryman while he had a boat?"

After this, Poldik told the parents that their boy had learnt to understand horses wonderfully soon. The boy then added that he was going on the water to wherry sand, and when Poldik explained the why and the wherefore he generally also obtained the consent of the parents.

And so then on the following day, Poldik led his young charge among the wherrymen, and he felt as though he was leading him to a wedding. He walked with quite a youthful step, his eyes sparkled, his face sparkled, his words sparkled. He chose his words as easily as though he were selecting twenty kreutzer pieces from ordinary kreutzers, and it was evident that he was contented with those which he had chosen. And when the boy got his boat and

punted about in it, and Poldik saw his face beam with pleasure, the tears came into his own eyes and he could have sung for joy. His heart beat fast, his feet made a few small skips, and he said as if he shared the boy's joyous sense of freedom, "The world will smile upon thee wherever thou lookest upon it. And thou wilt easily find some Malka and no one will look down upon thee. I have rescued a soul from thy clutches thou foul trade of the scavenger!"

Immediately after this Poldik sought another soul to rescue from the foul trade of scavenging, and did with him to a hair as he had done with his predecessor. He had already so many of these lads on the water that go which way he would for a walk, young wherry-men sprang to meet him and introduced themselves to him as to a father, so that sometimes he was heard to mutter to himself, "I think I must be a wherryman myself when I have so many children at the trade."





CHAPTER VI.

THIS Poldik wore a harsh and rude exterior, but if the heart is the real core and marrow of a man, within his harsh exterior there was an excellent core and marrow.

Many a year passed away. Poldik still stuck to his horse doctoring, and was cited as an authority in his department and summoned to a horse's sick bed like a physician. He had plenty of practice, and scarcely time to get through it all. His wealth grew very prettily, and already he might have spent any day he chose as a holiday. He could drive his own carriage, too, and he did drive one; for he got horses of a higher grade to be put to rights, such as had been knocked to pieces by drunken coachmen. And Poldik drove these horses in a carriage which he had expressly procured for the purpose, in order to test how far they had progressed towards convalescence. And he also drove them that people might see how his horses improved after so many Sundays or so many days, and to maintain his credit with the world.

He drove out like a gentleman who has his own coachman. The coachman was always one of those boys who had been adopted to be cured of scavenging and trained to wherrying.

As to what pertains to these boys, Poldik acquired by his generosity towards them the reputation of being a good-hearted fellow: it was a fine and honourable thing to take the children of the poor into his house and to look after everything which they might have need of. But we must not blind ourselves to the fact that he also laid himself open to the charge of eccentricity, and in sooth, just for these his good doings. He only took scavengers' lads into his house, and he only turned out young wherrymen. This fact now hung about his neck like a characteristic label, and people, though applauding his doings, also added, "Tut! tut! Poldik, if a German mouse (*i.e.* a rat) were to come to him from a scavenger and begged for help because it wanted to set up among sand wherrymen, Poldik would give it shelter." "And," pursued others, "anyone could swindle him who chose. Let the first idle vagabond come and say, 'I don't want to be a scavenger, I want to be a wherryman,' and Poldik would open his house and heart to the fellow." But then on the other hand, they all concluded their conversation with, "But, pray, who would swindle him, where will you find the heartless rascal to do it?"

In one of these summers it came to pass that Francis died. His boat was capsized by a paddle wheel, he himself was drawn under the wheel, swam to shore indeed, but took such a chill that he never again rose from his bed. Malka was left with a little chap about six years old. It was a cruel blow to Malka. There on the water which she loved best of all things, where, too, she had found the man of her choice, she must see him perish. And when she took stock of her means she found that the unexpected blow had left her without money for the funeral.

It was, too, an uncommonly hard trial to Poldik, but in a different way. His instinct prompted him to go to her, and then again it whispered to him, "Never mind her, she has ruined thee with her cold-heartedness, let her have her trials also. Pray, why have a heart?" But he mastered himself, went to her, and said, "Oh! Malka, you have much sorrow and anxiety, I will look after the funeral for you. People would cheat you who are a woman, a man is not so easily defrauded."

It was a heavy stone which fell from his heart at these words. And he looked after the funeral very decently, and took care that all who wherried sand on the Moldau and all who carted it away from the shore should take a part in the last sad rites.

When Poldik came home after the funeral he said to himself, "Poor Malka! nowhere any one to

turn to ! and her boy on her hands ! Where is she to work ? What wages can she earn ? ” And he wished to set off at once and say to Malka that she had better give her boy to him, that he would take him like any other boy, and that he would relieve her of all anxiety. He would have gone : but then again he said to himself, “ What should I do with the little scamp ? He will be like his father, he will never have heard of scavenging and care for nothing but the water. What is the profit of purifying his will from the taint of scavenging, when he has no will to be a scavenger ? And only because he had neither skill nor power to fit the thing into his own mental economy, he hesitated and did not go for the boy.

But once it was made known to him that Malka was ill, and that she did not know how her illness might end. Hereupon Poldik went directly to Malka and said, “ Ah ! Malka, give me this boy of yours : he will be very useful to me, and then you will be freed from all anxiety about him. The boy will be as though he was my own ! ”

On this Malka said, “ I thank you, Poldik, for your kindly offer : but I will not give the boy to you.”

These words made on Poldik the impression as though he had fallen from the sky. So then, she still even now so despised him that she would not even trust her child to him, although she was sick and in distress.

It is possible that anyone else, would have snatched his hat and quitted her at once. Even Poldik thought of leaving her, but his heart took a considerable step higher, he mastered himself and said, "And what if I should still wish for the boy." He thought to himself, is it possible that she does not trust him to my charge. On this, Malka said, "I, still, shall not give him to you."

Then at last Poldik stretched out his hand for his hat, and was departing: only instead of good bye, he said, "I did not think it of you."

And here Malka looked at him almost with anguish and said, "Do not take it amiss, Poldik, dear. But you wish to make all your boys wherrymen."

"Well, and what is the harm of that?" said Poldik, with a certain stubbornness which carried with it a touch of reproach to Malka.

"I do not wish to make a wherryman of him," said Malka.

"Your boy has not to be a wherryman," asked Poldik, and he felt as though he had come to the end of all his latinity.

"What then is he to be?" he added.

"His father perished on the water: I cannot look any longer at the water without crying, I should be miserable every day if my child had to be on the water for the whole day."

That was a reason with which Poldik could hardly quarrel—it carried conviction with it. He laid his

hat down again and said, "Well, well, doubtless you are in the right. And what then has he to be?"

"A scavenger, Poldik dear, a scavenger responded Malka, almost enthusiastically." "There! now you know why I cannot give him to you."

"A scavenger!" Poldik was again taken aback, perhaps this time more violently than before. "Perhaps you know of someone," continued Malka, "who would adopt him and, of course, I will work for both of us in order to pay for his apprenticeship."

She would work for both and could not even work for one, said Poldik to himself with a sigh.

And here a gigantic conception emerged in him. Ay, it is possible that even a giant would have felt himself weak beneath its weight.

Poldik's head went round at the notion, and he felt as though some tremendous weight had exhausted his feet and hands, and even his tongue and words. He knew what he wished to say, but at that moment it seemed an impossible thing to say it. To-day, at least, it was too much for him; step by step he had gone higher, but now at the same time he felt that if he attempted another round of the ladder, he would stagger and perhaps fall.

He took the final step, staggered, but did not fall.

"I know of such an one," said he. "I will make a scavenger of him for you."

When Poldik expressed himself in these words he felt as though he had expressed his consent to a crime,

and yet on the other hand he felt that something stirred within him which gave him wings, just as if he sped in flashing skiff along the Moldau, and just as if he felt a joyous sense of boundless freedom. Malka looked at him as at a man completely new—just as if it was not Poldik, and said :

“They do you cruel wrong, Poldik : they say of you that you are an eccentricity, and that you don’t want anyone to scavenge. Oh ! what a cruel wrong they do you !”

These words confirmed in Poldik the sensation of having acquired wings, although they told him that he was about to undertake something wholly repugnant to his habits of thought.

Well, and so Poldik became once more a scavenger, and I think that in thus doing he reached the highest summit to which his capacities could aspire. For the sake of a fair and noble deed—to take care of a deserted child, the son of a detested father, and of a mother equally detested—for the sake of the same fair and noble deed to tear to pieces and fling to the winds all theories, personal crotchets, hatred and distastes—name to me anything more sublime and more honourable—I know of none, and let your heroes rant and declaim from the boards I know not how far to your satisfaction—Poldik the scavenger can boldly place himself beside any of them, and stand on a level even with the most favoured.

He hated the scavenger's business from the very bottom of his soul, and now he walked once more beside his cart with sand and led by the hand the son of Francis, called Francis like his father; he instilled into him a love for a calling for which he himself felt no love; he pointed out to him its advantages, though he himself knew of none; he was silent about its disadvantages of which he could count so large a number.

But he adapted himself to it once again. He still continued to exercise his trade in horses, not however to the same extent as formerly, but only like an artist, when he felt an inclination to do so.

But now as day by day with little Francis he rolled out his "hee! hee!" and "heesta!" alongside his vehicle, he felt delighted when the boy first caught up the cry, and then he taught the little fellow to say "cl! cl!" and to shout at the horses, and he felt enormous delight when Francis' first oath tripped off his tongue in the true Poldikian style. He already began to settle down to scavenging and it began to please him.

And now his horses again halted at the alehouse, at the blacksmith's, the fruiterer's and the tobacconist's, only they were different horses and rather brisker than the old ones. And then there was a different landlord at the alehouse, at the blacksmith's forge a different blacksmith, at Naplavka also an almost completely different set of sandsmen and

wherry-men—most of them the result of his own careful training. And what immeasurable astonishment was exhibited at the stations when Poldik appeared with his vehicle once more, although if he chose he might have driven his own coach—we can imagine for ourselves.

The people were completely puzzled to know whether he was an eccentricity or whether he was not, and in the ale-house several times in the week we might have heard the following conversation.

“People always said that Poldik turned scavengers into wherry-men, and now look you, he scavenges, and that with a wherryman’s little chap !”

“’Tis true he goes about with a wherryman’s little chap. It is Malka’s boy, and don’t you know that Poldik wanted to have her for his wife. Tra-la-la ! Strangers’ boys he teaches to be wherry-men, and he keeps scavenging only for—the Lord be with him. Tra-la-la !”

But even bygone times, more or less, renewed themselves. Malka, when her health was restored, once more brought dinner for them ; at first, however, only for her son, but soon for Poldik also, because Poldik said as we drive together we must also dine together. Sometimes they waited for Malka, and when she was coming with the dinner, settled her in the cart and then drove on with her. On these occasions little Francis must needs take the horses in hand, that his

mother might see with her own eyes how far he had progressed. Here Poldik laughed heartily at his "Whoah ups" and whip-cracking and looked the picture of contentment. There was only one fault to find in Francis, and that was that he was still diffident of swearing before his mother. This slight shortcoming which marred the perfect whole, Poldik could not pass over in silence, and therefore said, "Ah! Malka, he is learning very fast, but he still wants the least little bit of courage." And that meant more particularly, "If only he would swear all would be well."

At last Francis was well nigh grown to man's estate, and then Poldik entirely confided to him the charge of the horses and vehicle. He himself carted sand no longer, but devoted himself solely to the management of horses. He was already old, he could not any longer walk so well as he was wont, beside the cart, "hee" and "heesta" no longer issued bravely from his lips, and the horses obeyed them better when they heard them from the lips of Francis. "Come, then, Francis, manage everything for me," said Poldik, and thus he quitted forever his previous occupation.

When Poldik grew enfeebled by age Malka shifted to his lodging and tended him as though he had been her father, and when he expired no son and daughter could have grieved more heartily for a father than did Malka and Francis. And it would

be hard to name any other funeral in which so many people took part, and amongst whom so large a number could say and said with tears the words, "He was our father."

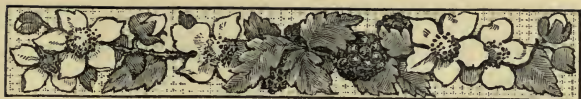
And in the evening after the funeral—if you had seen the Moldau! The whole Moldau was covered with boats of all descriptions, on all of which were lanterns of every colour of the rainbow and torches, and from all of them issued plaintive music and plaintive dirges—it was a grand "pannuchis" in which all joined with the frankest and heartiest good will.

So lived and died Poldik, the scavenger.





On Condition: or Pensioned Off.



CHAPTER I.

AT three o'clock in the afternoon, across the village green of Frishets went the sexton; he had in his hand a large key and directed his steps to the chapel.

Any of the villagers who were standing by the window and saw the sexton, at first only said to themselves, "Where, I wonder, is old Vanek going?" Afterwards they called to their wives, to the servants, or to any one who happened to be near at hand, "Look! look! Vanek is going to the chapel! Can there be a fire anywhere, or can any one be dead?"

"And where can there be a fire, and who can have died?" was the answer to these questions; but to every one it was apparent that one or other of these events must now have taken place.

After this those who stood by the windows ran out in front of the gate, and cast a curious glance after Vanek to see whether he was not going into the chapel. At this moment his key rattled in the door, the door opened, and Vanek vanished within the chapel.

“What, I wonder, can Vanek want in the chapel?” thereupon enquired the neighbours one of another, on the village green; each took a few steps toward the middle of the green, and then replied to one another that no one could tell, because there was no fire in sight, and no one in the village had been seriously ill.

At that instant the funeral bell rang out. “The Lord God grant him heaven,” said the neighbours’ wives, crossed themselves and began to pray.

The men removed their pipes from their mouths, lifted their caps and crossed themselves from brow to breast. Everyone was like a statue, only that his lips moved somewhat; in the village nothing stirred, the funeral bell swung to and fro and spoke to all, and yet no one knew for whom it was ringing.

All at once the funeral bell was silent and the neighbours and neighbours’ wives, just as they had at first trailed off from the windows on to the village green, so now they trailed over the village green toward the chapel, each one only saying, “The Lord God be with us! Who is it, I wonder?” Their impatience increased because old Vanek still lingered long in the chapel, doubtless, in order to tie again to the bell the rope, which owing to its rottenness so frequently snapped asunder.

And when Vanek issued from the chapel, and his huge rusty key again scraped in the door a cry

arose as if from a single mouth, "Who is it for, prythee, who is it for?"

"The Lord God grant him heaven—old Loyka," answered the sexton, and drew the key out of the door. "Oh Lord! Lord! and is it really he?" repeated the neighbours in great astonishment.

At this moment approached the spot, with a basket in his hand, Vena, who acted as messenger in the parish, dwelt at Loyka's house, and moreover had the reputation of being a rascally impudent fellow. He also enquired, "Who is that for?"

"For your good old master, the pensioner," answered the neighbours, sympathetically.

"For our—ho! ho! for our master, the pensioner—ho! ho!" sneered Vena, and burst out laughing. Although all held him for a fool, still it outraged their feelings when he laughed at such an occurrence.

"This is no laughing matter, Vena," said they, reproachfully.

But something seemed to have tickled Vena's fancy. "How, pray, isn't it a laughing matter when it is? Sure enough, he sent me into the town early this morning, look you, with a basket, look you here; that I might bring punch and rosolek, look you here; they keep it at the brewers. He set me on the road as far as the gate, put some small change into my hands and said, 'buy there something for your own maw also, my Vena, that my flasks

may not suffer by the way ! ' and I am just coming from the town, I am bringing him punch and rosolek, look at it ! And then he goes and dies, you say ! Who is to drink it, pray ? And then you say this is no laughing matter." And again he laughed, until little by little his laughter infected the bystanders listening to it, who at last were fairly puzzled to know what it all meant, and turned inquiringly to the sexton.

The sexton, considering that Vena had dared to turn his official reputation into ridicule, strode up to the culprit as though he meant to take him by the collar. It was evident from the expression of his own eyes that he would most willingly have pulled Vena's ears or his hair. When he stood about half a pace distant from the other, so that his nose touched Vena's nose, and his two eyes glared into Vena's two eyes, he exclaimed pretty sharply, " This is no time for drinking, I tell you. He for whom I have once tolled the bell is dead and done for, and when I toll the bell for thee thou wilt be dead and done for."

This speech and the manner in which it was spoken, not only convinced the neighbours, but it convinced Vena himself. He stopped, almost let fall his basket on the ground, and burst into tears. So that again in a little time he infected all the neighbours' wives at all events with sorrow ; until they were fain to wipe their eyes, and the neighbours

said to one another, "'Tis a poor fool, but he hath a good heart !"

After a few moments, Vena lifted the basket, took out of it a flask of rosolek and gulping down his sorrow, said to the neighbours and neighbours' wives, "What's to be done with the rosolek now that he is dead, now that he is nothing at all ? Ah, neighbours ! Help and drink it to his health !" He himself took the first pull and then offered it to the bystanders.

"What are you to do with him when he is a fool," said they again to one another, half laughing, and in the meantime began to call upon the sexton to explain how it came to pass that old Loyka had died so unexpectedly.

"He dropped off ! He dropped off !" said the sexton. "It came upon him just like a yawn—like a hiccough."

"The Lord God be with us !" cried some of the neighbours' wives, for it appeared to them that the sexton spoke as learnedly as a doctor.

"Frank, his younger grandson, was with him," continued the sexton, "you know they loved each other truly and dearly. 'Franky,' he said, 'when I die my watch will be thine. Besides this, what is in yonder drawers and chests is also thine, it is that same silver which I have collected for thee.' Frank said, 'oh ! grandfather, who, pray, would talk about death, and you so hale and hearty,' and he wept.

‘Do you mean it,’ said old Loyka, ‘but I am old, within a little of a hundred years’ ”

“A hundred years !” reiterated the neighbours, “that is a great age.”

The sexton proceeded, “Ah ! Frank,” says Loyka again, after a pause, “I feel constantly as though I had a clod of earth upon me. Boy ! clear off this clod of earth !” “You have not, grandfather,” said Frank to this, and again wept. “You think not ? Well, then lead me out on to the balcony,” and although in the morning he still walked like a stag, and was as fresh as a fish, now he leant upon Frank as though he could scarcely take a step forward.

Frank collected his strength—you know he is thirteen years of age—led him out on to the balcony, and Loyka looked all over the court-yard and as though he bid farewell to everything, and after he had cast his eyes in this manner upon one thing after another—buildings, courtyard, granaries, implements, he said, “Well-a-day, what is the use of crying about it !” Then he made a sign to Frank to lead him back into the living room. And when Frank had led him almost into the middle of the floor, Loyka hung yet heavier upon him; and said, “Come off ! come off !” just as if he wanted to tear something off with his hand, and at that moment he fell down dead on the ground beside his grandchild.

“ He dropped off ! he dropped off ! ” reiterated the neighbours, and in their eyes trembled a tear of compassion, and at the same time a sort of astonishment and excitement at the thought that he had died so suddenly.

Hereupon all that stream of neighbours and neighbours’ wives just as they were by the chapel gate, trailed off towards Loyka’s farmstead at the other end of the village.

“ At such an age people do not die, they drop off to sleep,” said one of the neighbours, and at once cited a case where something similar had occurred ; there was, also, someone somewhere almost a hundred years of age, and he had died at dinner. Then again, others knew that at such an age people knew the hour of their death before-hand, and confirmed the fact by instances. These instances, however, did not suit well old Loyka’s case, because he had sent, while it was yet early morning, into the town for punch and rosolek.

And now before his farmstead they began to recount to one another his life’s history.

“ It is something to say, such a great age ” observed one—it was the Mayor of Frishets—“ and yet last summer at harvest, he cut his own pensioner’s share of the crop, and it was thus wise : he cut along the line of reapers a portion equal to his own height, when he had cut so much, he said, “ What availeth it, I cannot ply my sickle nowadays ? ” and he laid

him down at full length in the space which he had cut.

The neighbours smiled slightly, and said, "Ah! well-a-day! How could he ply his sickle at all at such an age, I wonder? A hundred years!"

"One time while he lay thus," proceeded the Mayor, once more, "I go close by him with my sickle, and I say, "Oh! grandfather help us in God's name." Loyka perceived that I was smiling and said, "Lazy body! lie no longer, up! up! and work thou also!" Then he rose and set himself to cut the corn, I meanwhile sat beside him near the boundary stone, and waited till he had once more finished cutting his own small portion. When he had finished it, he again lay down.

"And why could not his son, the peasant proprietor, cut it for him?" enquired some, though, indeed, they knew why this was not done, because they had already asked the same question several times at least, both in the present and the past.

"He could and he could not," answered the Mayor again, "of course you understand—he was a pensioner on the son's bounty. 'Tis seldom a son gives the father anything who is once pensioned off."

As soon as this sentence was pronounced it was again evident that Vena was present. He stood by the farmstead, considering what to do with the rosolek, now that no one was willing to drink it. But as soon as he heard about the son and the

pensioner on his bounty, he seemed all at once to be beside himself. "A murrain upon you every morning, ye peasant proprietors, who do not know what to do with your father when he is pensioned off. Only let me have power in my hands for half a day, I would drive you round the circle, I can tell you! Every one of you should be pensioned off at once for two years at least. A son cannot have a korets of land reaped for his father, because the father is pensioned off; blast all such sons, say I."

"'Tis a poor fool, and yet he hath right on his side," said some of the neighbours, "but he is touched here." Others again said, "How, then, dare you say this, Vena, are you not a dependent on Loyka's farm?" To this Vena replied very indignantly, "If I am on Loyka's farm, I work for myself, I have no need of any one to work for me. Also I speak for myself, I have no need that any one should speak for me."

The neighbours only said to this: "He knows how to give cut for cut, 'twere better let him be."

Here the Mayor again interposed: "Well! well! old people are sometimes rather laughable; in *their* time everything was quite different, you know. While Loyka lay on the rye which he had cut, he said: "Now-a-days, my good gossip, there are not such winters as there used to be. In my young day, the sparrows fell from the eaves and partridges and hares were frozen like clods of earth. More

than once we thought it was the cat scrattling at the door, and lo ! it was a hare. Did you ever hear the like of that ? ” On this I say to him, “ Oh ! grandfather, one summer you had your well froze hard.” At this he sat upright in astonishment just where he had been lying, and said, “ Lord ha’ mercy ! the well hard froze in summer time ! No ; I cannot remember it ever to have been hard froze in summer time in my young day. The Lord God be with us ! ”

At this all the neighbours laughed simple-heartedly, and each one confirmed by some instance the statement that old people like to discriminate between their times and ours. And now the Mayor beckoned to the bystanders that they should step quite close to him. And then he said not very loud “ On this, I said to old Loyka, “ Oh ! grandfather, I *am* surprised to find that you do not know that you had your well hard froze in summer time.” “ My dear good little gossip,” says he, “ for many a long year now I have not ventured to draw water from my son’s well ; his peasant wife does not allow it.” At these words a thrill of consternation ran through the group of listeners.

Vena, it is true, had not wound himself into the selecter circle, but, none the less, he exclaimed as though he had heard all that was said “ Not allow him to draw water ! The frog retires, that the dog may lap, and a son shuts his well against his own father.”

“ You see he knows how to give names to things, and yet 'tis but a poor fool,” said the neighbours, and they thought wonderingly about the peasant proprietor, Loyka, although they had already heard about this affair of the well, and in fact from Vena himself.

“ While I sat that day by the boundary stone,” the Mayor began again, “ I enquired of Loyka “ Oh! grandfather you can call to mind many a Kaiser this day, I take it.” “ I can call to mind Kaisers and gentry,” replied Loyka. “ I call to mind the time when Kaiser Joseph ploughed, and then I call to mind the time when all the gentry did it after him, only that the Kaiser ploughed with horses and the gentry with us.”

Here the neighbours again laughed, and said “ What of that! he knew how to muster his parts of speech, and to give a slap in the face to high and low, only that he preferred to give it to the high and mighty.”

“ I call to mind yet more,” said Vena, insinuating himself into the conversation. “ I call to mind how that we plough one with another, and how that each hospodar laments that he cannot plough the field with his own father who is pensioned off. Oh! ye sons, what wouldn't you give to have your wretched ‘ tatas ’ tugging at the plough.”

This remark appeared extremely personal, and they began to gesticulate against Vena; but some

recognised that what he had said was at least true as regarded the Loykas.

Here one man said "Only what surprises me is that old Loyka was so contented when he fared so ill as a pensioner."

"Ah ! well ! well !" said the Mayor, in elucidation of the mystery. "It is easy to be content when one has the wherewithal. He had good reason to be content. He had money enough for himself alone, about which he was wont to say "While that exists, I need never beg anything of anyone." And well that he had it, and not well that he had it. Well, because his son, the hospodar, frequently kept back his pensioner's share of the crop, and the old man might have been reduced to real distress if he had been kept waiting for it ; not well, because on the other hand old Loyka, when the law bore him out, forced his son to pay every quarter of grain due. From this money sprang their differences. And then all that he could spare was laid by, and now Loyka's Frank gets it all."

"That boy will cut a figure in the world," said some one. "He quite hung on his grandfather, and was at his house all day and all night long, until even his mother was angry with him for it. I maintain that he loved his grandfather more dearly than he loved either his father or his mother."

"And where pray will you find children who do not love their grandfather and grandmother more

dearly than they love their parents," suggested others again. "You have at once his elder brother Joseph," responded the former speaker.

"Faugh! he, indeed, why he never loved anyone in his life." The opinion thus pronounced apparently expressed the general sentiment, for no one contradicted it.

At this moment a heart-rending wail resounded from the farmyard, and attracted the attention of all the neighbours present. They peered through the half opened gate and said to another, "'Tis Frank; we might have known it."

Frank ran out on to the village green, his hair dishevelled, his face wet with tears, his eyes still filled with tears, and sobbed forth amid sighs and gulplings, "We have lost grandfather, our people drive me from him—oh! unhappy that I am!" And he cried until he choked.

During this outburst of sorrow the neighbours were silent. Only Vena took upon himself the task of continuing the conversation. "Ah! we know why they have driven thee out. They want to grab! They are grab, grabbing!" and he began to represent in dumb show how they were scraping everything into their pockets. But all at once, while thus engaged, Vena paused, clapped his hand to his forehead and said "Pantata, the mayor! how forgetful I have been! When I went to the town this morning old Loyka gave me this paper, and says he

“ When you come back from the town give it to my good gossip, the Mayor. And here am I forgetting all about the paper from sheer surprise ! ” He put his hand to his pocket, where he had an official document, drew out a roll of paper and handed it to the Mayor.

The Mayor broke the seal, ran his eyes over the contents, and said “ This is Loyka’s last will. He leaves everything to you Frank, and everything is here mentioned down to the smallest details.”

Very likely Frank did not hear what the Mayor said. He sat by the gate on the ground, leant his hand on the abutment of the wall, his head on his hand, and wept without cessation.

But extreme surprise and astonishment had got the better of the rest of the bystanders, as was evident from the following conversation.

“ Show it us, good gossip, the Mayor, show it us ! ”

“ On my faith it is all true ”

“ And as soon as Vena returned from the town, he was to hand it over to you.”

“ Well, and he has handed it over, to be sure.”

“ And then, they say, that old Loyka did not know when he was to die.”

“ To a hair he knew that he was to die to-day.”

“ You see, I told you that old people knew to a hair when they are to die. Every one who is a hundred years old knows it. And he bade

bring that rosolek here, that they might have it ready against the funeral."

The circumstances of the case so cohered together, that they only the more confirmed the general astonishment.

Then the Mayor said "The defunct has appointed me trustee, to look through his personal property in the presence of witnesses, and to take everything under my protection. Come, then, neighbours; if two of you are willing to offer yourselves to be witnesses we can go to the house of the defunct at once, and look over his personal effects."

"Prythee, why not? prythee, why not?" answered the neighbours, and hurried into the courtyard of the Loyka's, but instead of two, all pressed forward, just as they were. Each man thought to himself "Who knows whether the Mayor will not select me to be a witness, and if not, what matters it? I shall be a witness all the same."

Even the neighbours' wives hurried after the neighbours into the courtyard. Only that here in the courtyard the male element detached itself from the female; the neighbours following the Mayor up the staircase into the pension house, the neighbours' wives remaining below in the courtyard.

In the meantime, that is to say, while Frank ran out on to the village green and the neighbours betook themselves to the pension house, Loyka's son and Loyka's son's wife laid out the corpse of the

defunct on a bed, and the following conversation passed between them.

"Thirty years have we carried hither his pensioner's share of the crop, and at last we ourselves are free to enjoy the pensioner's portion," said Loyka's wife.

"We have wronged him grievously," said Loyka, the hospodar, and clasped his hands.

"We him ! he us much more ! It is pretty late in the day to call black white now that he is dead, when it was allowed to be black during all his lifetime."

"He hath his dismissal ; who knows what awaits us."

"A pleasing spectacle, truly ! to see you begin now to condemn what you approved for thirty years. We lay down a burden with him in the tomb ; do not prevaricate, you know it as well as I do."

"I would far sooner that I did not know it."

"Oh ! you men, you men ! ye fear not the living, and as soon as their eyes are closed in death you grow timorous. Why should not I feel light-hearted to-day ? I never feared him while he was alive. I tell him even now that he is dead—I feel the lighter for his loss. I should like to know the farm where they would not breathe free again when the pensioner on their bounty was taken from them, and such a one too."

"He was my father."

“ And went to law with you about every measure of his pensioner’s share of the harvest. He never wanted for anything, he had already laid by so much for himself, and he kept back from us enough for ten people to have lived upon, and then he went to law with his son.”

“ But I lived with him before in peace and happiness, even now I feel sorry for it all.”

“ Don’t speak such words, peasant. Where do people ever treat their pensioners differently. What is given to the pensioner (*vyminkar*) is a lost thing to the farm, particularly if he has no need of anything, just as, in fact, your father had not.”

“ You always deafen my conscience, wife.”

“ Yes, when conscience tells thee to reckon five for nine. And when it dubs me an ambitious worldling—is that conscience ? ”

Such and similar remarks were made by this woman beside the corpse of the venerable centenarian, her father-in-law. The grave which generally closes the lips of slander had no such effect upon her.

Then her eyes fell on a small table which contained, as she was aware, a considerable amount of her late father-in-law’s property. She reconnoitred the small table, found a key in the drawer, pointed it out to her husband, and said well delighted—

“ You see we have the key in our hands ; it will be ours, ours, too, will be all these savings and not

that nasty Frank's. And you would have let the boy stay and take it all."

Her husband understood this hint, and stepped close to the table in order to assist his wife in her investigation, and also to see with his own eyes how much his father's savings might amount to.

They had just not opened the drawer when they heard steps—many steps—on the staircase. They listened, the little key remained in their hands just tapping against the table. At that moment entered the living room of the pension house—the Mayor, and after him almost all the neighbours.

Frank also had taken this opportunity to insinuate himself into his grandfather's apartment, knelt again beside the corpse, and only called out "Oh! grandfather! oh! grandfather!"

The Mayor saluted, "Neighbour Loyka, may God console you. Look here; just read through what is written on this paper, and then give that key into my hands."

At these words the peasant woman grew pale, and almost trembled. "You see here, neighbours, a key in my hand. I should like to know who dares to say "that key is mine."

"Certainly you dare not say so, my good gossip," said the Mayor sleekly. "Just wait until your husband has read through what I have given him."

When hospodar Loyka had read his father's last will and testament to the end, he went to his wife,

tore the key out of her hand, and said "Take it, my good gossip, the Mayor!"

"Well, then, you may see about the funeral as well, good gossip, the Mayor," said the peasant woman, and burst into tears. They were tears of anger, of impotence, and of little mindedness.

"I will see about it, my good gossip, I will see about it," said the Mayor; went to the corpse, took its measure, then took Frank by the hand, gave him this measure, and said "Go, little son of mine, to the gravedigger, that he may delve a grave for thy grandfather according to this measure."

Frank took the measure, and sped like the foam, and the Mayor and his witnesses discharged their duties with respect to Loyka's personalty.





CHAPTER II.

IN Frishets they had a chapel, near which lay the old burial ground, but they had long ceased to bury the dead in it. The burial ground for the present defunct was distant about a quarter of an hour's journey from the village, and almost in a deserted spot.

From Frishets to the west trended a low hill for a distance of two miles ; it was tillage land on both its slopes and divided into fields, while along the ridge of the hill itself ran a carriage road. Half way along the hill and near the carriage road was the burial ground of the union—that is to say, Frishets and several other villages.

Four lofty walls, built in a quadrangle and white-washed, proclaimed from a distance that they were the walls of a cemetery. High aloft and stretching to heaven in the centre of these four walls a ruddy-painted cross on which hung a white metal figure of the Christus confirmed it, while several lesser

crosses which only just managed to peer into the neighbouring district with their summits ranged along the wall, equally bore witness to the fact. If a dead man could have risen from the grave, he would only have needed to sit astride the cemetery wall and he would have seen his native village and the very house in which he was born, from whatever parish he had been brought hither. Contrariwise, the villagers of any parish could see at a glance the dwelling place of their dead, and visit them in memory.

Moreover, in the cemetery were two modest buildings placed side by side. One with three grated windows ; and in that dwelt the gravedigger. One with a single small window without any grating, and there dwelt the bones. It was quite proper that, on account of the lonesomeness of his dwelling the gravedigger should have his windows grated, in order that no ill-disposed person should break into his house ; it would have been quite superfluous to put a grating to the charnel-house ; for who would ever think of entering that single window ? At one side were a few skulls piled in order and a few unburied shin bones—that was a treasure about which a thief pays scanty heed.

By day mirth and gaiety reigned around the burial ground. People worked afield, conversed, sang, whistled, shouted to one another from field to field, and answered one another from field to field—and sound and speech are the source of all gaiety.

From field to field scudded the partridges, sometimes a hare ran along the road as far as the cemetery and browsed on the graves of human ancestors to requite these for having dined off his own ancestors. Or a lark fluttered from the field into the blue air of heaven, and there poured forth melody for its own delight, and also for our enjoyment. The field grew green with varied tints of emerald; grew pink and white with clover, grew yellow with beetroot, grew crimson with hosts of poppies—and in the midst of it all glistened the burial ground, in the midst of the burial ground stretched to heaven the ruddy cross with the white iron figure of the Kristus.

Here, at eventide and at nightfall it was not so gay. No one was working in the field, no one spoke, the lark was asleep, and the green tint of the field was bathed in the sombre colours of evening and of night. And then those crosses which peered forth over the cemetery wall were just like heads and those heads looked just as if they were leaning on their hands, and it all peered forth over the wall at the carriage road, and at anyone who might be passing along it. The tall ruddy cross in the centre raised on high its desolate arms, on which, in windy weather, thumped the white iron figure of the Kristus. From the burial ground a bat flitted forth—after this there was nothing for it but that the wayfarer should cast a

timid glance at the bone-house, to see whether something was not there also glowering from the window, and then lastly he must fain cast a glance at the dwelling of the gravedigger to see whether there was a light in the window or whether those windows also were lost in ghostly phantasies.

At eventide and at nightfall few of the villagers cared to take a walk hither, and anyone whose road led along the ridge of the hill or on either side of it, preferred to diverge I know not how many miles through lanes and byeways rather than allow himself to be surprised at night in the neighbourhood of the burial ground. As to dwelling here day after day and night after night, for a whole year, for all one's life—you might have built a golden palace on the spot and I know not whether you would have found in the whole country-side a man to inhabit it.

Logic sometimes makes strange skips. All will perceive that a place which everyone shuns after dark is one of perfect security. A child might stand a siege there, and the puniest could put to flight the staunchest hearted. And yet every grown-up person would have considered himself a poor creature if he had settled there as gravedigger. And yet on the other hand, he thought to himself that the gravedigger ought to be a perfect Hercules to bear calmly all the horrors of the place—the glowering of the crosses over the wall, the thumping

of the tinned figure of the Christus, the flittering of the bats, the desolateness of the bone-house and similar things.

By a strange coincidence it happened that the gravedigger was the Hercules of the neighbourhood, Bartos, about whom whole books might be written. If Bartos had ever said, "I will give battle to a ghost," everyone would have wagered that Bartos would get the best of the encounter—such a man and no other was cut out to be a gravedigger in a lonely cemetery. So then, perhaps, it came to pass that the popular logic argued backwards, as thus: because the present gravedigger, Bartos, was the Hercules of the neighbourhood, it followed that only a Hercules was fit to be a gravedigger in that spot.

How many a story of his strength was recounted by credible eye witnesses. Once on Sunday, when Bartos was on the spree, there drove into Frishet's a drag full of soldiers on leave, and in their insolence they chivied the people hither and thither and struck at everyone who approached their vehicle. Hereupon arose a panic in the village, people ran out of the ale-house and among them Bartos. Bartos seized hold of the horses, held them back, and held back even the vehicle. But, thereby, he effected but little, because he could not approach the carriage, seeing that the soldiers struck out at everyone. "Come and hold the horses! come and hold the horses!" shouted Bartos to his neighbours. And

when the neighbours held the horses Bartos crept under the carriage, arched his back against it, lifted it off the ground and upset it, so that the soldiers fell out of it and then the citizens were quit of them. Never in their lives had the soldiers suffered such a reverse, even from an enemy, as on this occasion.

In these parishes it was a custom to test the strength by charging at one another face to face. Folks only tried it once with Bartos—never a second time ; at the second fling, he sent every one spinning, his opponent staggered backward and it was a wonder if he did not fall.

Also, “ the hook ” was a frequent mode of exercise. Two men clasped the bight of a large hook with the fingers and thumb and then pulled against one another across a table. Come and try “ the hook ” ; no one tried against Bartos more than once. He always gave way the first time, but at the second bout he dragged along his adversary together with the table, then his adversary for a couple of days had to nurse his thumb in cold water.

As he was strong so he had artifice. Once he went homewards by night in winter wrapt in his cloak. There fell upon him four footpads, and in order that he should not escape they muffled him in his own cloak. But Bartos tore away from beneath the chain which served for a clasp at the neck—glided out of the cloak like an eel, and soon put all his enemies to rout.

In order that no one should be surprised that highwaymen should fall on a gravedigger, I must say at once that he was well known to carry money about his person. In those days strong boxes and savings banks were not yet invented. People, therefore, who were possessed of wealth lodged their money with Bartos, because he dwelt in a cemetery, and because he was so strong. It became the custom of the neighbourhood to have their money buried in the ground by Bartos at his abode. Thus Bartos seldom or never went to or from a village without carrying silver in his pockets, sometimes a hundred pieces or more. Just as any one wanted money or was flush of it, Bartos brought it or carried it away. Hence we may see also that people built on his tried honesty as on a rock.

If he went to more distant villages at night-fall, and had to go by a wood, and he was apprehensive of danger, he laid himself somewhere behind the bushes, teamed the money into his boots, and so slept till morning. Or if it was cold he laid himself somewhere beside a dung hill, thrust his feet into it, and slept thus.

Once they almost had him. Hereupon he turned round, and cried out "If you do not decamp, I will plunge this knife into your bodies." The chaps took fright and fled, but Bartos had merely a splinter of wood in his hands in place of a knife.

Of his youthful experiences especially, many stories were told. He was once in an alehouse where music was playing, and the lads were disputing who should have the honour of dancing a solo.

When they could in nowise determine among themselves, Bartos stepped up to the table, behind which sat the musicians, clapped his fist down upon it, and shouted out "Play me a solo." The musicians tuned up, and Bartos had already begun to spin round in the waltz with some damsel or other. But his comrades would not leave him in peace. Like one man they clubbed together against him, and tried to hinder him from dancing. Bartos let go his partner, caught the foremost of the lads with one hand by the neck, with the other hand by the girdle, lifted him off his feet high in the air, began to chevy the others with him, to strike them blindly with him, and to press them towards the doorway until he pressed them through it; then he flung the one whom he had held by the neck and the girdle among them, and said "Take him, it was he who worsted you." Then he looked around for his partner, she was cowering under a bench in a corner of the room and trembled all over. Says Bartos, "Just come out of that," and then to the musicians "You have not finished playing us the solo." Never in her life had the damsel danced as she did that day. The servants peeped in at the window to see how she and Bartos danced together,

and he danced until he was out of breath. When he could not make another step, he called to those who stood outside "Now you may come in, now I will let you have your turn."

But Bartos was by no means a gross tyrannical sort of giant. Never in his life had he ever challenged anyone, never in his life had he ever given the first blow, after that, if he gave one, it was scored in the popular memory. Nor was he the least at feud with the gentry in the public offices, only that there again he had a tongue in its proper place and lammed into them with words. He had no fear of persons, be they gentle or humble; of the gentry still less than of the humble.

He carried money for his neighbours to the public offices and into the city; who, pray, could take it into the town more securely, who, pray, could do their business for them better than Bartos. But God preserve the official who dared to touch him even with a harsh look! Or just fancy if they had threatened him with the clerks in the office. Four clerks might have come, and neither singly nor altogether would they have dared to forge upon him—perhaps they would have been afraid to receive him even in the lock-up house.

Once the neighbours drove into Prague with wheat, and took Bartos with them as cashier. Bartos stopped at the toll booth to pay the duty. How could the collector know that it was Bartos, the

gravedigger! He paid no attention to him, and made as though he counted. "How much will it be," cried Bartos with such vehemence that the paper fell out of the toll collector's hand. "Come, come, we will have no bullies here," said the toll collector. "A thousand curses! you are the bully," said Bartos, and nothing more. The toll collector also said nothing more, but his hand trembled with rage as he gave Bartos the change, and thus it happened that one 'desetnik' fell on to the pavement outside his office. "There is a 'desetnik' missing," says Bartos. "You have it on the ground," says the tax collector, and nudged himself into a certain amount of valiancy. "I pick up nothing from the ground," says Bartos. The toll collector must even shuffle out of his office, pick up the 'desetnik,' and give it into Bartos' hands. "There now I have all," said Bartos, and as he quitted the toll booth muttered loud enough for the toll collector to hear, "I will teach people to throw money on the ground."

Another time he went to an office for the purpose of drawing a sum of money and the cashier happened to be a new comer, and thus did not know Bartos. This official said that he had the money at home in his house, that Bartos might go on in advance, and that he himself would follow him directly; Bartos went into the house. But the official did not come for a long time and Bartos began to grow impatient, and when the cashier did come he began to talk to

his wife and did not notice Bartos. Bartos rose from his seat and began to open the windows in the room, he opened them all. The official begged to know what he was about. "If I have to wait," said Bartos, "I must have fresh air; stinks are not for me." Then the cashier's wife began to interfere, and shrieked out "Look at the red-hair'd ruffian!" "Yes, look at him," retorted Bartos quickly, "and then look at Madame's sweet double chin."

This silenced the official's chatter, and indeed his good lady's, who hastily threw a handkerchief about her neck; after a few minutes Bartos had the money counted out to the last kreutzer.

Once he came to a lawyer's office, and there they wished to put him off with a paper scrawled over with pot hooks, telling him to come another day. "And, pray, why should I come another day when I am here to-day," answered Bartos testily. "What is that?" said the official. "That I will not stir hence until my business is transacted." The official shouted to a clerk. Just as he had uttered the words Bartos stepped up to the table behind which sat the official, and said tartly "A clerk on me! Here I am, if you want me." Then he struck the official's table such a blow with his stick that it set all the pens and pencils skipping, and shouted "Am I then come to look for justice at some booby's office!" Hereupon all the official staff rushed in pell mell, but as soon as they saw Bartos they

whispered something to their chief, whom the affair had compromised, and in five minutes Bartos business was transacted. It is to be understood that now none of the clerks were forthcoming, and if they had come it would have been just the same.

If some of my readers think these answers and sayings of Bartos somewhat rough and boorish, I cannot help it. But still I say that he only paid folks in their own coin, and that he only paid them out in this manner when they as good as braved him to do so. But if the brutalities and all the insulting expressions were noted down, which in previous times (every one knows how long ago I mean) the officials permitted themselves to use towards the people, a pretty large volume might be compiled. Also it came to pass sometimes that the neighbours grumbled in the presence of Bartos about the brutal behaviour of the officials. "It is a curious thing," said Bartos, "I have had no fault to find with them now for a long time."

Once he came to an office and the official was smoking. Bartos also drew out a well filled pipe and lighted it. "Do you think you are in the servants' hall?" objected the official. "Yes," answered Bartos, "here is smoke as if from a lot of stable boys," and they passed it over.

In other respects Bartos was, as we have said, intrinsically good hearted, and even not without humour. About a hundred paces from the burial

ground stood several pear trees which belonged to the neighbours of Frishets, but they allowed Bartos to take the fruit in requital for his various services, so that Bartos might say the pears were his. Once, on a Sunday afternoon, thinking that Bartos was not at home, two lads climbed into a pear tree and shook off the fruit into bags. But, as it fell out, Bartos approached. The lad who saw him first jumped down and cried out to the other to make haste for Bartos was coming. But the other one dawdled. Just as he was about to spring down Bartos run under him, caught him by the collar, so that the lad found himself treading the air with both feet. While continually threatening him with the whip, his captor only said "I'll teach thee to dawdle another time," and then he let the lad go scot-free.

Just as people told stories about Bartos as the country Hercules, so also they had to tell about him in his character of sexton. More than once they had seen him weep while he dug a grave; and more than once they heard him hold mysterious communication above an open grave. More than once they had seen him sitting on a grave as though he were holding intercourse with the dead. But not perhaps with this or that dead man, but with all whom he had known.

He used to visit them in succession or according as he missed them, and felt sorry for them. "I must go to Klimoff," he would say, "just now I feel

so sorry for him." And then he reminded Klimoff of all sorts of things—where he had walked with him, where they used to ramble together, when they had gone to hear the band play, and so forth. When this recapitulation was quite at an end, he would say "And now it is your turn, Klimoff, to tell me how you get on down there." After this he listened for a moment, and when no reply came, he made as though he had heard an answer, and said "Ah! yes, that is just what I thought. How curious! Ah! ha! so it is like that down there. Ah! well! how different it must be when it is like that," and so forth.

He had a very special set of reflections when after seven summers some one's turn came to be exhumed. When he had delved down to the coffin, he rapped on the lid, and shouted "Are you there, Vaclav!" After this he answered himself for the dead man, 'I am.' "Come then, creep out," he said again for himself; then with the greatest care he raised the lid of the coffin and, beholding the corpse which looked as if swathed in spider webs, he said "And pretty dainties thou dost get down there! What a figure thou art! Thy own children would not recognise thee if ever they were to meet thee! And not to have a rag on! Shocking! Pray when did you comb yourself? And what is the fashion your head gear follows? Nowadays we never wear it thus. To think of combing it thus." And so on.

Then again he run through the dead man's past life with him, and here it pretty often came to pass that Bartos wept ; just as if he had only then laid the corpse in the grave. Generally this exhumation concluded thus " It is not well with thee down there ; they have patched thee together but poorly. Alas ! I fear thou will not hold together much longer." After this he touched the corpse, which thereupon fell to pieces into bones and a few clods of earth.

This man, just as he was compassionate towards the dead, was yet a hundred times more so towards the living. There was no grief for which he did not feel compassion, there was no misfortune which ever failed to touch his heart. But his was not perhaps the spurious compassion which is assumed to win general admiration ; rather was it the compassion which, if possible without parade and bustle, is succeeded by compassionate deeds.

Once they brought a coffin to the burial ground slovenly nailed together. No one followed it to the grave save one little girl three years of age. In the coffin lay a kind of a servant girl—they called her Katchka. She was an illegitimate child, and the little girl who followed her to the grave was also illegitimate. How could any honest soul come to such a funeral ?

For the nonce, Bartos had to play the priest. He repeated a few prayers over the grave, and when the little girl wept over the coffin, he said " Sprinkle it,

little one, sprinkle it : maminka will sleep the lighter ; for the tears of a child are the fairest waters of purification." When he wished to lower the coffin into the grave he saw that there was to help him only one servant who had driven the dead Katchka in an open ribbed wagon. "Is there no one here but thee ?" inquired Bartos angrily.

"And who then would come to the funeral of such a——," said the servant, and leered in a very saucy manner.

After this Bartos was silent, and filled in the grave over the corpse. When the grave was filled in, the little girl plaintively lamented that she had no one to go to, and that no one wanted her in the village.

"And why does no one want her," asked Bartos of the servant.

"And who, then, would trouble his head about her, about such a ——," said the servant again, and once more leered in the same saucy way.

"What dost thou mean by 'such a one,' thou boor!" retorted Bartos on the servant. "Did any other than He who created thee, create her? Wilt thou make thyself her judge, because she came into the world thus and not otherwise. Thou knowest, forsooth, who is such an one, and who is not such an one."

And then he gave the servant a trifle to salve his wounded pride.

"Well they all say it," observed the servant apologetically.

"All such boors as thou," retorted Bartos. And then he turned toward the little girl, and enquired what they called her.

"Staza," said the little damsel.

"You shall never go with him again little Staza," said Bartos, and took her by the hand. "You shall stay here with me and Maminka. Would you like?"

"I should like."

And from that day forth Bartos adopted little Staza as his own.

She had been with him six years and called him 'tatinka!' and so she was nine years old when Loyka's Frank brought the measure to Bartos, in order that by it Bartos might delve the grandfather's grave.





CHAPTER III.

IT was a dreary mission for Frank to carry to the cemetery the measure for his grandfather's grave. Hitherto he had not in the least realized that it was a burial ground. He had been there when somebody was being interred, when they sang hymns to him, prayed above his coffin, and wept for him. But what effect have all such ceremonies upon a mere child. Issuing from the burial ground he sees the laughing green fields, the flowery hedgerows, he sees the weasels run along the hedgerows, and forthwith yon grim cemetery is forgotten, and is no longer the truth.

But now he was carrying thither the measure for his grandfather's grave. So, then, after all it was the truth. And then he saw how the crosses glowered above the wall into the surrounding district, how in the centre rose the red cross into the air, and on it the white-iron figure of the Christus ; he saw, too, where dwelt the gravedigger and where was the bone house—so, then, all that world of greenery around him was no longer true, only the cemetery spoke to him. Its speech was like the speech of some direful ogre ; Frank scarcely understood the words, and

was filled with a kind of vague horror at which the heart within him died away and his throat was half choked with sobs.

The gate by which one entered the burial ground was a wicket gate, and painted the same colour as the great cross in the centre of the cemetery. When Frank had reached the gate he stopped outside it, and looked through the wicket into the cemetery. He looked upon it as upon that horrible Unknown, with which he must now make himself acquainted. He looked first at one grave and then at another, and then thought to himself "Perhaps grandfather's will look pretty much like that one." Then he looked to see what state the graves were in. Some had half collapsed into the ground, some were covered with a fair green mound, on some were flowers, others were railed off, at the head of some stood a cross, at the head of others only a staff with a lath nailed across it to form a cross, at the head of a third was only a stave without any lath across it. In one corner of the burialground lay a few unburied bones.

Although it was a warm day at the beginning of June, and the air was clear and full of pleasant sounds, winter seemed to have entangled Frank in its icy folds. That icy winter breathed from the cemetery and from each and every grave within it. It seemed to Frank as though with the measure for his grandfather's grave he had taken upon himself

an unpropitious task, and as though he had undertaken a mission to an accursed place which it was impossible to carry out without contamination. He stood by the gate as if frozen to the spot, not knowing how to fulfil the task entrusted to him.

At that moment came out of the gravedigger's dwelling the little Staza with a watering pot in her hand. She came out into the cemetery and watered the graves, and all the while sang with a tiny treble, sweet, and tuneful, the words "*odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky.*"* "*Rest in peace ye faithful spirits.*" The grass and the flowers were half withered on the graves: where she sprinkled them they began to smell sweet, and their odour was wafted to the gate where Frank was standing.

It was a very tender sentiment which now filled the mind of Frank. That little girl fluttered like a butterfly over the graves, watering with the dew of life, like a spring shower, nature's exhausted and withered offspring—and singing all the while "*odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky.*" (*Rest in peace ye faithful spirits*). From the cemetery the blast of winter ceased to blow, a sportive presence seemed to linger there, something breathed warm along the sward, perhaps even the dead felt it. Then once more Staza tripped away and vanished through the door of the gravedigger's abode, and the place was again untenanted. No song nor dance was there,

* *Odpotchinte vpokoji vejrne dusitsky.*

only the jointed grasses raised aloft their jaded limbs. And now it seemed to Frank that after all the place was cold and gloomy.

But lo ! there was Staza once again with fresh water and once again was like a butterfly and once again was buzzing like a bee and once again was watering the flowers everywhere, approaching even almost to the gate. Frank was apprehensive lest she should catch sight of him ; if she caught sight of him all must be at an end ; he stepped aside a little towards the wall and only just bent his head towards the gate and peeped. Staza was again singing “odpocinte v pokoji,” and now she mingled with it divers other tunes. She drew them forth from her inmost soul one after the other, just as we draw out from a wardrobe dress after dress in order that we may look through them and give them an airing. Even those melodies needed an airing from time to time lest they should be jumbled together in her bosom.

Frank, standing by the gate, felt himself every moment growing more at ease ; as though some one had given him in that accursed place a silver clue, and he had caught hold of it. Again he emerged from his hiding place and boldly posted himself in front of the gate indifferent now as to whether Staza saw him there or no.

Staza saw him, she stopped, she ceased to sing, and looked towards the gate only just a moment to

see whether the young visitor wished to enter or whether he wished to give some message.

When Frank did not speak, she advanced several steps towards the gate, and then said "And so it is at your house, Frank, is it? Wait and I will go and call tatinka." And she ran into the gravedigger's abode. Frank was lost in amazement to know how the girl could read in his face what was passing in his inmost soul. We, however, need no explanation of the mystery. They had heard the funeral bell, and Bartos had said to Staza "Where is it, I wonder?" And he waited expecting some one to give orders about a grave. Staza now saw Frank and said, as if repeating her father's question, "And so it is at your house!"

When Bartos sallied forth with Staza he had already a pick on his shoulder and Staza had in her hands a shovel, wherewith, apparently, to throw out of the grave the loosened clods of earth. Bartos went directly to the gate, and said in a peaceful manner "My dear Frank, perhaps it is grandfather, eh?" "It is grandfather," responded Frank in a voice still half drowned in tears. "Grandfather, grandfather," repeated Bartos to himself while opening the gate. "Ah! well a day, none escape the bed I make them here. Some of us fight longer than others against being sleepy, but each sleeps once."

Frank stepped into the burial ground and handed over the measure. "The measure!" said Bartos,

“your grandfather could just get under my chin, he was amongst the tallest men in the village, I know his measure. And where, pray, would you like the grave to be ? ” he enquired of Frank. “ Take a look round, I will be with you almost immediately and set myself to delve the grave.”

Bartos departed into his house in quest of sundry other implements, and now Frank cast his eyes here and there in search of a suitable spot. But he saw none, because even a grown up person when overtaken by some real and sudden sorrow, is as one entranced so soon as anything is given him on which to come to a decision.

Here Staza led him by the hand, and said “ Do you know what, Frank, the people from Frishetts lie by yonder wall, which faces Frishetts : take a peep, yonder in that corner is the highest spot of ground, you can see it from the gate, and if you were to stand upon the grave in that corner you could catch a glimpse of Frishetts.

It is hard to make out what internal connection these words had with one another ; but they appeared to Frank to be so consecutive and reasonable that he agreed at once. “ Well, then, there in the corner let the grave be,” he said.

“ And if you put a cross there it will be visible as far as your house ; and if you plant a sapling there it will soon grow big enough to be visible also as far as your house,” observed Staza, almost enthusiasti-

cally. And now, all at once, Frank discovered so many good reasons why the grave should be in that corner that nothing in the world would have induced him to permit of its being dug in any other spot.

“Yonder,” said Staza, when Bartos returned, and there they began to delve.

These few and briefly spoken words had already deprived the cemetery in Frank’s imagination of much of its horror. Bartos dug, Staza shovelled out the loose earth, and Frank was a silent spectator. Bartos from time to time sang over some popular song which was in keeping with his trade, Staza’s little voice accompanied him like a fiddle string, and Frank formed the audience.

Bartos also occasionally muttered a few sentences which apparently had reference to the defunct, but which neither of the children at all understood; perhaps Bartos purposely spoke in such a way that Frank should not understand him, and should not have his sorrow reawakened.

All at once Staza said “Franky, when the grave is delved, we will lie in it together.”

At these words Frank recoiled several steps. Staza laughed, and Bartos remained pensive. Frank recoiled like a machine without volition; Staza laughed at this, and Bartos, after a moment’s pause, said “We are digging close to your mother’s grave, we must take care not to come upon her coffin, it has only been in the ground six years.”

"Delve so that I may come quite close to Maminka, then I shall sleep with her," said Stara, as if she consoled herself with the idea, for anyone who had looked for melancholy from this poor child, would have proven himself completely ignorant of the heart of childhood. Staza was but three years of age when her mother died ; in such a little heart sorrow cannot obtain a foothold, and after six years a child does not know what it means to have lost a mother.

After these words Frank again drew near the grave on the pretence that he wanted to see whether Bartos and Staza would delve so cleverly as not to disturb the neighbouring grave.

"Thou hast never yet slept in a grave Franky," said Staza not at all interrogatively, but just as though she were stating a certainty.

"In a grave?" enquired Frank in astonishment. Staza grew on graves as the grass and the floweret grew upon them. This cemetery was her playing ground, her village green where she frolicked, where she delved and watered the plants and tended them, it was her school where with Bartos and on those graves she learnt little of literary lore 'tis true, but more than all the patter of the class room.

When she was yet quite young she had once asked Bartos "What is my mamma doing in the grave?"

"She sleeps," said Bartos.

After this, the very next time Bartos delved a new grave, she laid herself in it and slept there as she said "Like Maminka." From that time she slept in every grave as soon as it was delved, if it was not winter time and if it did not rain. When any one died she consoled herself with the idea that she and Bartos would dig a new grave, and then that she could once more sleep in one. On the whole a funeral was a considerable source of pleasure to her. She saw plenty of people, she saw the priests, then she heard them sing and weep and pray. These funeral prayers became her own morning and evening prayers, these hymns were her hymns, and from the people whom she saw there she formed her notions about human beings, and about the great world. And so she always looked forward to a new funeral, because it was something novel.

She looked forward to it also because she heard new hymn tunes, and when the burial service was over she sang what she had heard until the next funeral, which perhaps brought her a fresh supply of hymns. However as she heard at every funeral "odpocinte v pokoijsi verne dusicky," (Rest in peace ye faithful spirits), this hymn became her favourite. She did not know what these "verne dusicky" (faithful spirits) were, but putting two and two together in her head she had a notion that they were those who slept in the graves. Whenever she laid herself down to sleep, she said to herself

in her inmost heart that she would be a "verna dusicka." And sometimes when she had slept there a long time she said to herself on awakening "To-day I have been a long time a faithful spirit."

So then when Frank received her question whether he had ever slept in a grave with so much astonishment, she said "You have never yet slept like a faithful spirit." And after a time she added "Stop, and we will be faithful spirits together."

Frank however, of course, did not comprehend the connection between these expressions; however they pleased him somehow; when he looked at Staza he felt as though he had to say "What thou sayest pleaseth me. Why should I not wish to be with thee a faithful spirit."

After digging sometime longer, Bartos enquired of Frank how his grandfather had died, whereupon Frank narrated about the clod of earth, about the balcony, and how after this his grandfather fell dead at his feet. This narrative was listened to by Staza with great interest so that for a while she even ceased to shovel out the loose earth, and looked upon Frank as a man of mature wisdom, for had he not had a grandfather who was very, very old, and did he not lead about this grandfather even unto his death.

"Good," said Bartos after a while, "we have now come close beside thy mama." Thus was Frank's grandfather's grave all but delved, and because

Frank saw that it now already fatigued Staza to shovel out the earth from such a depth, he took her shovel and said "Give it me. I also wish to do something for grandfather." He stepped into Staza's place, and shovelled out the earth. Staza sat beside the grave, and looked to see whether he was an adept.

And now it seemed to Frank as though the grave was deprived of its horror with every shovelful of earth which he flung out. So when Bartos said 'Done!' Frank had already no wish to depart; he leant on his spade and said to Staza "So, then, come to me faithful spirit!"

Bartos shouldered his implements and paying no further heed to the children, betook himself home.

"Do you know what?" said Staza, "I will sow clover on your grandfather's grave."

"Why?" inquired Frank.

"But dost thou not know? And yet *I* know that thy grandfather loved bees—he had so many hives. Bees fly to clover, they will speed hither to grandfather's grave, and grandfather will tell them the message he wishes them to give to thee."

"Sow it!" said Frank; and now he longed for the clover to overgrow the grave, and that the bees might fly hither.

Then Staza sprang into the grave, seated herself in one corner, and Frank seated himself in the other.

"Thy mama has also clover on her grave," suggested Frank. On this Staza grubbed with her fingers in the direction where her mother lay, until she came to the coffin, then she tapped upon it with her finger and the mouldy wood gave out a droning sound.

"To-day I shall sleep beside mama," said Staza, and her eyes sparkled with delight. She had no very clear idea of what a mother meant, but she believed that it was a fine thing to sleep beside mamma. And she had advised Frank to have the grave dug in this spot for no other reason than that she might get near her mother.

"Shall you sleep here all night ? enquired Frank.

"Why should I not ? All night I shall sleep here and to-morrow also I shall sleep beside mamma.

"Who was thy mama ?" asked Frank.

"Who was she ?" said Staza. "Why who could she be when she was my mama ?"

This reply satisfied Frank, at all events if he had tried all his life he himself could not have invented a wiser one.

The sun set and the shadows lay upon the cemetery. In the grave it was already dusk.

"Aren't you frightened Franky," enquired Stara.

"Since it is in the grave in which grandfather will have to be I am not frightened," answered Frank, but he was frightened all the same.

“If you are frightened seat yourself beside me, we will sleep together or we can talk,” said Staza ; and she at once made a place beside her where Frank esconced himself without further invitation.

And they sat beside each other like two birdies in a nest.

“If thou art frightened, I will lead thee home,” said Staza. “I am not frightened.”

And now when Frank saw this little girl so completely without any fear, he said that he would not be frightened either, and that he would not go home. At that moment he felt so fond of his new companion that he could not bring himself to go home. He was happier seated by Staza’s side, and was with her in the grave.

After a while the moon rose, and the whole cemetery shone white like molten silver. The moonbeams penetrated even into the grave, all the interior of the grave looked as though it had been whitewashed, and when Frank looked at Staza she was white also. Frank involuntarily nestled closer to her, and Staza laid her sleepy head on his bosom.

Staza slept with ‘maminka’ beside Frank, they were together ‘verne dusicky.’

Later in the night if they had not been asleep they would have heard the tramp of feet approach the cemetery, they would have heard a rapping at the gravedigger’s window, they would have heard the voice of the gravedigger, and afterwards all

these feet and different voices approach the grave. But because they slept they heard nothing of it.

Loyka, the peasant, it must be understood, when the evening was already far advanced and no Frank appeared at home, fearing some mishap, went with Vena and a domestic in the direction of the cemetery to see if he could not meet with Frank somewhere or other. And when they failed to find him, they went as far as the gravedigger's to make enquiries about him. 'He was here until quite late this evening,' said Bartos, whether he has departed I know not, but it is possible that he is lying in the grave.'

"In the grave?" enquired Loyka with surprise.

"In the grave," replied Bartos with a peaceful face, and he led them to the grave. "Look how prettily they have fallen asleep together. If you choose awaken him, but I would not awaken him if I were you."

They slept like two birdies, and knew nothing of what was going on around them.

"When he cannot sleep any longer with his grandfather, he spends the night in his grave," said Vena, "do not awaken him Pantata."

Loyka, however, was of a different opinion, and awoke Frank, and this caused Staza also to awake. The boy was drowsy, leapt to his feet, and looked about him. Over the burial ground streamed the white light of the moon, the crosses stretched forth

their gaunt arms, by the grave stood his father and bade him come home with him. Frank did not at once collect his ideas ; only he knew that he was with Staza and that he was not at home.

“ Let him be ; children are children,” said Bartos.

“ But I order him,” shouted Loyka vehemently, and wanted to jump into the grave.

“ Softly, softly,” said Bartos quietly ; and held Loyka with his hand so that the peasant could not stir a muscle.

“ Here I am master—everything only by my consent,” and he did not allow Loyka to take a step forward.

“ I am master of the boy,” said Loyka.

“ So you are,” said Bartos. “ These children consecrated with their breath the grave of your father, and did you wish to desecrate it ? Are the wrongs that you have already done him during life, then, not enough ? ”

These words smote Loyka's conscience. He ceased from insisting further and in order, perhaps, to escape from hearing the recital of his own past deeds over the open grave, departed from the spot without more words.

Now the children heard the steps and voices receding ; but being still frightened they once more cuddled close to one another, and before very long were again asleep, Staza on the bosom of Frank and Frank having his hand entwined around her neck.

When they awoke in the morning, Staza said 'If only I had thee for a brother.'

Frank still held her head in his hands, and said "Well, thou hast me for a brother, if thou wishest."

Above the grave, folks say that truth is spoken, these children were speaking in the grave itself, so what they said was certainly the truth.

After this Staza shared with Frank her bread at breakfast, shared her dinner and everything else, led him all over the cemetery, taught him the airs which she had learnt, and by evening they had more than once sung together in a duet. And because on the morrow his grandfather's funeral was to be, Frank said that he would not go home at all that day, but would wait until they brought thither his grandfather, and for that one they would still be faithful spirits.

Staza told him to pay attention and notice what tunes were sung at his grandfather's funeral, and she would learn them all by heart, then they would sing them over again by the grave side until the earth had been raked over his grandfather's coffin.

And when the funeral took place, that came to pass which no one the least expected. For while people thought that Frank would follow the corpse with tears and miserable lamentations, Frank never wept at all. And while they thought that Loyka's wife, the peasant woman, would not shed a tear, she

sobbed and wept as though she were broken-hearted, and looked as though she wished to tear her hair.

The peasant woman thus conducted herself, because she wished to efface the impression left by her previous behaviour. She deceived none, but she fancied that she deceived them.

Frank and Staza listened what sort of hymns were sung above the grave that they might learn them afterwards.

When the funeral was over, Frank said "Now that we are like brother and sister, thou must come to us at Frishetts that I may entertain thee at our house."

Staza went with him : he led her by the hand and the neighbours pointed at Frank and said "Just look at that boy : he went to dig his grandfather's grave and out of that grave he is leading — Staza."

The neighbours' wives said : "Look ! look ! he is going about with Staza, with that — she will be just like her mother."

Frank said to Staza : "Staza, guess whom I love better than anybody else."

"Who ?"

"Thee."

Staza said "I am so glad for thee to lead me about that I could walk by thy side for ever. I have never gone about with anyone before."

And they went about together before everybody.



CHAPTER IV.

THE Loykas, man and wife, by the bedside of their defunct parent, perhaps, left the impression of being an avaricious couple. And cruelly should we wrong them if we held them up to scorn as avaricious. Avaricious they were only towards the pensioner on their bounty, and in this they had the common vice of perhaps a thousand of our families. To be pensioned off—that was to be the enemy of the property. That the pensioner and father were one and the same person, did not diminish the grave crime of being pensioned off by a tax upon the farm produce. The pensioner effaced the father, and the Loykas saw in their father only a pensioner on their bounty. And granted that the pensioner did them a good turn now and then—that was his duty as a father; but the Loykas did not dare ever to do him a good turn—he was pensioned off, and one's pensioner must be thwarted every way.

And yet the Loykas were not in this matter by a single hair worse than many others; I say it with a sigh, but you find Loykas certainly in every second or third village.

It was not, then, avariciousness; it was the relation between the peasant and the father who had pensioned himself off. For in other respects the Loykas had all the good qualities of the Czech peasant. They were honest, affectionate, and hospitable. From their farmstead no needy person ever departed without aid. If a beggar had gone through all the village and departed empty-handed from every house, he went to the Loykas' certain of being relieved. If strolling fiddlers or harpers came to the village they stopped at the Loykas' as at their own home, there they got their victuals, passed several nights, and no one ever enquired when they meant to be off. Ay! the Loykas' had two chambers specially set apart in the courtyard next to the coach-house, and these chambers were open all the year round; any one who had no roof of his own might take up his quarters in them.

And they were occupied all the year round, strolling musicians roosted there like birds of passage.

Tinkers tarried there till they had mended all the Loykas' pots and pans and those of the whole of Frishetts.

The kalouunkar (tape pedlar) who walked from Domazlik, and only occasionally went home for goods, dwelt in the Loykas' chambers as though he were at home with all his family. Sometimes he was there several Sundays, got his victuals from Loyka's kitchen, and had not even to say thank you

for them. So it had been all his life long. The kalounkar's grandfather and great grandfathers had received hospitality there from the Loykas'—then how could they refuse him a home there. Surely they would call down the wrath of heaven upon themselves should they venture to dismiss him. The kalounkar (tape pedlar) was himself born there, his present young family was born there, the old Loykas were sponsors in baptism to the old kalounkar, the younger Loykas were sponsors to the wee kalounkars so now there was a family connection. The Loykas would have felt ill at ease if at certain particular seasons they had been without kalounkar and without tinkers. Perhaps if their humble friends had not been at their house, the Loykas' would have sent to search the district for them. At pilgrimage times, at festival times, or about the season of the village gala—they must needs be at the Loykas' several Sundays before the great event, and several Sundays after it. So that, indeed, there were but few occasions in the year when they were absent.

Besides the kalounkar who sold ribbons, the cloth pedlar walked the district, and he had even his stores at the Loykas'. On Monday he drew forth from his chest various samples, beside cloth, all kinds of kerchiefs and stuffs for dresses, then he waited several days until Sunday drew nigh, or until the vigil of the village gala, and then he shouldered his pack and went. If it rained or if the weather was

threatening, he did not sally forth, and all that time was an extra hand at table in common with the other servants.

And many an occasion occurred, moreover, when Loyka's hospitality was reckoned upon or missed. People came to have their sieves mended or their knives ground, and also people drove or walked round by the Loykas' with their implements from the field.

Thither also came people from the village, and enquired—"Is not the sieve maker here at your house? Is not the knife grinder here? We wanted sieves; we wanted to have our knives sharpened." Without fail the sieve maker appeared regularly before harvest, and the knife grinder as regularly before the village festival.

In those chambers beside the coach house reigned life and jollity. There the conversation never flagged, and in the evening even Loyka, the peasant, and sometimes, finally, his wife would pay them a visit. Here all that occurred in the district of general interest was recapitulated. So that you might refer to the Loykas' as to a well informed gazette. The kalounkar (tape pedlar) and the cloth pedlar tramped the whole district and had free access into every family—who then could know more than the cloth pedlar and the kalounkar?

And then when a fiddler and harper came, there was nothing for it but that he should play and sing

over every song he knew of modern and of ancient date, every event consigned to verse, songs of comic character and sprightly pieces of music—then the evenings were gay indeed. Hither, too, from the village a few stray folk would come and form an audience. Hither also Frank led his young companion, with whom he esconsed himself somewhere in a corner and listened.

The narratives which specially pleased Frank and his parents, mostly dated from long winter evenings which include the whole circle of the marvellous, from fierce banditti to black dogs and white women, so that the young people were half dazed with fright if they had to find their way home across the courtyard or across the village green.

Such was the hospitality of the Loykas' that they became proverbial. And these same Loykas treated their own father who was pensioned off upon a reserved share of the field produce, so badly that he did not even dare to draw water from their well !

In these chambers was also a constant guest—Vena, the general messenger, the half crazed man. If the Loykas had told him that they did not wish to have him any longer about the place, he would not have believed that they spoke in earnest, so thoroughly was he domesticated at their house.

Those chambers by the coach-house would no longer have been themselves if Vena had not been there. With him every one who entered them must

sharpen his wit, and from him every one must submit to receive some rebuff either spoken in jest or earnest. With his so-called folly Vena provoked much merriment, and by what he said in earnest he raised the merriment a degree higher ; it is often the fate of truth that we receive it with laughter.

And thus so many mouths were fed on and off the estate that if Loyka, the peasant proprietor, had shewn all these guests the door, he might have given three shares of the produce as a pension to his father and still have had enough for himself. But, of course, such an idea had never even occurred to anyone ; thus it had ever been on Loyka's farm so long as he could remember ; it had been thus all through the life-time of his grandfather and even earlier. And yet we have heard that Loyka, the peasant, went to law about every quarter of wheat with his own father. What congruity was there in all this ?

All whom we have mentioned : the tinkers, the family of the kalounkar, the cloth pedlar, the sieve maker, the knife grinder, the fiddlers and the harpers assembled at the Loykas' when Frank's grandfather died, and they were there when Frank led Staza to the farmstead. They assembled at his grandfather's death as if they had been summoned.

The fiddlers and harpers considered it their duty to present themselves to see whether their services would be required. It was the custom in our

districts to go by easy stages from the burial to music, from music to lively music, from lively music to a downright banquet, and from a banquet to a debauch. Just as if at the funeral they had been sad against their will, and required a lively banquet quickly to counterpoise their weight of woe. They took good care to keep sorrow at arm's length, and must needs have something to divert them from it. Or perhaps genuine sorrow is so rare and portentous a thing that it is necessary to give it a fillup with a flourish of light music whensoever it reveals itself. Or perhaps true sorrow is a superfluous thing, if we needs must lay our dead in the grave with sighs and tears through which all the time we catch the sound of instruments which are tuning for a dance. Or perhaps our sorrow is but as a game of play from which we shake ourselves free in a moment, and which with a dance is ended. But at any rate such is the fact : after a funeral there must be music, and music of a light and cheerful sort.

So then the musicians came confident of employment, and the Loykas conscientiously and sedulously completed all their preparations.

Before the funeral procession issued forth from the door, Loyka's wife had already arranged her kitchen ; fat beasts slaughtered the day before were already in chops and quarters on the trunchions or were frying on the hobs. Then Loyka's wife followed

the corpse, in order to cry her prescribed modicum of tears,—to cry a good bottleful, and it was all just as necessary and just as much belonged to her sphere as the sauces and the sauer kraut.

After the funeral, then, Loyka's house wore all the appearance of a festival. The guests who were staying in the house and those who were invited for the day sat down to a richly furnished table, which in the form of a horse shoe occupied the whole of the principal apartment; the musicians seated themselves in the hall by the pantry, and after a few moments everything was as merry as at a wedding.

It was a custom in the Loykas' family for the males to marry late in life. Thus our defunct centenarian had not married until well nigh his fortieth year: Loyka, the peasant proprietor, not until after his thirtieth year, consequently he was now sixty and his wife fifty. Joseph, his eldest son, was now about four and twenty—we know the age of Frank. Loyka, the peasant, in contradistinction to the *vejminkar* (pensioner) was called young Loyka. But after the death of the hundred-year-old-grandfather, Loyka, the peasant, became all at once old Loyka, and his son Joseph was promoted to the dignity of young Loyka.

Joseph seemed fully alive to the importance of the day. He did not seat himself at table, but with watchful eyes superintended and arranged the dishes and liquors as they issued from the kitchen and the

cellar, and in the dining room he attended to the wants of all.

This did not escape the observation of those present, and as soon as conversation became general some of the neighbours turned to Loyka, and remarked "Your son makes an excellent hospodar."

"Ay, ay, and doubtless his kind father will not leave him long to wait—and why should you grudge yourself repose when you have so stout and goodly a successor."

Loyka, the peasant proprietor, smiled self-consciously to himself at these words, as though he meant to say by that smile:—"Just wait a little, and you will soon hear what I have determined in my mind."

Then when Joseph came into the apartment looking like a bouquet, and threw a glance around him like a recognised commander, the neighbours again said—

"So Joseph, my lad, you have but to look out for a sweetheart somewhere, your father yonder says he should like to have a daughter in his house, the sooner the better, and his wife agrees with him."

"You are rather late with your counsels," suggested another, "he hath pretty well selected already." And at this the speaker winked at Barushka, who sat near the middle of the table and who, when these words were uttered, bowed her

head over her plate that people might not see her face.

“Prythee, who’ll have me,” enquired Joseph airily, and at these words Barushka again raised her head from her plate ; Joseph went out of the room.

After this some of the neighbours said almost in a breath :—“ Oh ! Barushka, pray, what makes you so hot ? ”

“ I am not hot,” said Barushka, and looked about her with determination into which she had partially nudged herself in order that, if possible, she might still conceal what had now no further need of concealment.

After this a burst of music was heard from the hall, and in the dining room all laughed at what they had said, and continued to say more like it.

When the music was over in the hall, Loyka, the peasant proprietor, rose and posted himself with some solemnity by the table. He wished to address the assemblage. Just before he spoke he looked at his wife, and when she nodded assent, he cleared his throat and thus began :—

“ Dear neighbours and neighbours’ wives ! As to us old folk,” and here he pointed to himself, his wife, and his neighbour Kmoch, the father of Barushka, “ we have quite come to an agreement. And so if Barushka has nothing to say against it, we will settle the day of the wedding, and you are all invited to it.”

Here Loyka lapsed into silence : he looked all over the assemblage to see what sort of effect his words had produced. They had produced an effect.

“I could have told you so just this minute.”

“Yes, God grant them happiness, they will make a nice couple.”

“Barushka is at ease now, she is not hot any longer.”

“And where is Joseph?”

“Oh! not far off, I warrant. Perhaps he is listening somewhere.”

One of the neighbours rose in order that he might fetch Joseph; the others made a place beside Barushka, and when Joseph entered the apartment, he was greeted with a hearty volley of congratulations, and the neighbours who led him in pointed to the vacant place beside Barushka, and said “There, that is your place.”

“We *were* surprised,” said the neighbours’ wives. “Hitherto we never had the least suspicion,” but they had had a pretty shrewd suspicion all the same, because they had already several times talked the whole matter over at home, on the way to and from chapel, on the road to and from market, on the village green, and behind the barn.

Joseph seated himself beside Barushka, and when silence again prevailed, he said “Oh! Barushka, prythee why not? Since our parents wish us to wed why should we not be man and wife,” and after

this he imprinted a smacking kiss on her lips, so audible indeed was it that every one yielded to an equally audible fit of laughter.

“And people say there was no understanding between them.”

“The deuce! they understood one another perfectly well.” “Such a smacking kiss is not given for the first time.”

Glasses were now raised and were emptied to the health of the young couple.

When after this they again sat down, Loyka, the peasant, still remained standing; not having yet said everything he wished to say, he prepared himself for a further continuation of his speech in a solemn manner. As if at a secret signal a flourish of music resounded from the inner hall, and then there was complete silence throughout the apartment.

And Loyka, the peasant proprietor, began again. “And, verily, on the following terms: The farmstead will be adjudged to you young people, and I with my wife, look you here, will still be hospodar for six years in it. But again, if that is to say we grow tired of managing the estate as hospodari, we shall leave you the entire management, and you will give us for the term of those six years a quarter of all the produce of the farm. Only after the six years, shall we reserve to ourselves the pensioner’s (vejmkinkar’s) portion, but there is time enough to think about that.”

Now a pause occurred, and Loyka waited for a reply. But no reply came: Joseph did not stir, Barushka looked at her father, then at Joseph, and the rest of the company looked at one another. Loyka again took up the thread of his discourse. "If you are not contented with the conditions I have proposed, good. I and my wife, look you here, have the right to manage the estate for six more years, and only when those years are over need we discuss the question of your marriage. If, then, we are willing to grant the farm and house to you young people now at once, reserving to ourselves the management for the six years, we do this for the sake of you young people, because we know how you love one another, and that you are already all in all to one another."

Now Joseph rose to reply, and the answer was at the tip of his tongue. "What you settle, dear parent, must be held binding. How, then, could we venture to prescribe to you how long you are to be hospodar. Be hospodar as long as you like. Grant that the farm be adjudged to us, permit us to espouse one another, and all the rest will arrange itself in the fear of God."

Then Barushka rose, went to Loyka's wife, embraced her round the neck, kissed her hand, and said "Pani mama, if you should wish to manage the household until the day of your death, I will bear you on my arm, and will love you above everything.

Only let me be Joseph's wife and your daughter. I desire nothing more."

These words tripped quite glibly from Barushka's tongue, and no doubt came from her heart, and yet she spoke them with a kind of forced energy as though she was anxious that they should not miss their mark. Loyka's aged wife pressed her to her own bosom and embraced her, Loyka wiped away his tears, and at the same instant the neighbours wiped both their eyes and noses, because in all public assemblages tears take this direct route to the ground.

"Oh! what a daughter that is," said the neighbours' wives to her father Kmoch, "how well she expresses herself, too; you must love her, indeed, you must. And how proud you must be to have such a daughter."

"How could I fail to feel delight in her," said Kmoch. "She takes after me: that is just as I should have spoken."

Then Barushka also stepped up to Loyka, kissed his hand, and repeated in somewhat different words all that she had said a moment before to her future mother-in-law. Here again during these reciprocal endearments you might hear tears falling, only that this time they were still more audible, because just then a braying of instruments resounded from the inner hall whereby the solemnity of the moment gained a sort of official confirmation.

“Dear children,” said Loyka, “so long as we manage the estate, we shall also dwell here in the principal house, and you will be banished for the time to the pensioner’s (vejminkar’s) house, where dwelt your grandfather. When we cease to manage the estate we shall ourselves go into the pensioner’s house, and you will shift hither into the principal building.”

Barushka said “Dear parent, say no more about it at present ; what you settle, that same must be ; and were you to settle that we should take up our abode for the six years even in the two chambers where lodge your humbler guests, I would still bear you on my arms.”

At these Barushkine periods Joseph only smiled and nodded as if to testify that he agreed with every thing that Barushka had said.

There are people who give way to genuine weeping as soon as they hear anything repeated in a solemn manner, even though the words repeated be wholly destitute of meaning to them. We hear parents weep to whom their children repeat the polite platitudes their instructor has taught them, and which are quite unintelligible both to the parents and to the children. We hear strangers and members of a family weep at a wedding as soon as a withered old parson begins to patter from a book divers reflections and pious admonitions ; we hear strangers, too, weep at a funeral as soon as the

priest begins to recite Latin words which now-a-days certainly no one comprehends. And so how could all these good folk who were present have failed now to give way to audible weeping at the announcement of Loyka so solemnly pronounced, sanctioned by strains of music, further affirmed by the protestations of Barushka, reiterated with energy intelligently and eloquently expressed.

So infectious was the sobbing and gulping which occurred in the apartment, that there was not a single eye which remained undimmed with tears. Both Loyka and Loyka's wife wept, only two people remained proof against this infection, and these were Joseph and Barushka herself.

When what we have here described was all over Loyka, the peasant proprietor, sat himself down by himself, and then looked greatly exhausted. Just as though he had toiled much and must rest himself awhile. He held the table with both his hands: his head sunk on his breast: his eyes stared vacantly at his hands: his breast heaved stertorously. In this posture he remained for a considerable space of time without change and, save his stertorous breathing, was like a statue.

From this strange reverie he was rudely disturbed by Joseph, who bade clear away the table, because the guests wished to have a dance. And so they were to disengage the table from Loyka's hands as best they might, and after this Loyka rose

from his seat and roused himself from these his thoughts.

In the inner hall resounded from harps and violins the merry music of the dance, and in a brief space of time, all who had any pretensions to youthfulness were spinning in the waltz. Even old Loyka took a turn, because Barushka came especially to him and requested the honour of a dance. And then all the rest of the company stepped out from the circle and allowed Loyka and Barushka to perform a solo, clapped with their hands, snapped their fingers, and laughed when they saw how frisky and active old Loyka was, and how he in no respect fell short of any of the young men there present.

And here old Loyka himself whistled like a young man, as if he were celebrating his own wedding, until all who were present were struck with astonishment, who although they laughed with pleasure at the sight of his youthfulness, still thought in their heart of hearts that it was not quite in keeping with Loyka's age and character.

After a while the rest of the company were again in the circle, this time Joseph also who had received Barushka from the hands of his father, and now all tootled and whistled, young and old.

Who would have said, if he had entered at this moment, that these people were at a funeral in the forenoon, and were now continuing the funeral solemnities ?

And yet there were two small souls who kept it still in mind—Frank and Staza, who from the inner hall among the musicians, looked at all that was passing in the dining room.

And so, during an interval, while there was a pause in the dance and only the sound of whistling was to be heard in the dining room, a kind of consultation here took place between Frank and the musicians, and before any one expected what was toward, Frank and Staza struck up with the hymn “*Odpocinte vpokji verne dusicky.*” (Rest in peace ye faithful spirits).

The musicians, fiddlers and harpers, accompanied them. Staza’s little voice penetrated like silver, Frank’s voice faithfully seconded hers, and then the music accompanied it all—it was as though tears were falling.

If you are well versed in tales of magic you will recollect how all at once everything in a castle was turned to stone. And thus at this song everything was turned to stone in the dining room. Here some one stretched out his hand to his neighbour and the hand remained stretched out, here another had raised his hand to tootle with it and the hand remained raised above his head, and the tootling died away in his throat. Here another wanted to turn to his neighbour, he had not quite turned towards him, neither was he altogether turned away from him. And when Joseph wanted to drink with

Barushka he proffered her his glass indeed, but the glass remained in his hand, and the polite speech remained unspoken.

Into the midst of all that whistling, tootling, and babbling of tongues a knife had worked its way, and smitten all with a sudden blow. Two childish little voices had taken upon themselves to hew down an ogre, and the ogre shivered and reeled to the ground. A morsel of genuine feeling claimed a hearing, and what was untrue and unnatural tumbled to pieces like a house of cards.

The grandfather still had the last word to-day. He spoke by the mouths of those children who constrained even the harpers and fiddlers to their cause, and all that gay company in the dining room again knew that it was the day of his funeral. Not gladly certainly, but no one could say, I do not know it.





CHAPTER V.

AFTER a brief space of time the Loykas celebrated a wedding. The festivities passed off at Kmoch's house—at the father of the bride's; after the feasting Joseph conducted his wife to his homestead. And here the harpers and fiddlers who had still remained there since the day of the grandfather's funeral, played before the hall doors as soon as the bride had entered the house, thus welcoming her with a burst of triumphant music. How could they do otherwise?

But they soon found out their mistake. "Just clear off the threshold, will you?" said the young mistress with such precision, that he whom it touched did not venture to reply.

Still, all the same, one of the musicians ventured to plead an excuse. "But our good old master ordered us to play here," said he in exculpation of himself and his companions.

"You lie!" said Barushka. "Your good old master never orders anything which I do not like. Just be gone from here in double quick time."

The musicians did not finish their performance, nor did they finish what they had further wished to say ; old Loyka stood as though a stream of hot water was running down his back, and Loyka's aged wife, had it not been the very day of the wedding would, perhaps, have stoutly seconded her lord and master.

The musicians did not finish their performance, and trailed like draggled chickens across the courtyard toward the coach-house, and entered their two chambers.

“ And that is a pretty welcome,” said they to one another.

“ Truly, she begins wondrous well,” they murmured.

“ This is something new on the estate,” they added.

Loyka's aged wife still could not bring herself to believe that the new bride wished so ruthlessly to abolish on the very threshold of her new life what had been for so long a series of years a speciality of the family. “ When you danced here at your grandfather's funeral I did not think, Barushka, that you were an enemy to music,” said she with a certain asperity.

“ I cannot stand things where they are out of place,” replied Barushka with yet greater asperity. Music is in its place at an alehouse, not at such a farm as this. I could not endure to live under the

same roof with a pack of strolling scamps, with whom one loses caste, because that class of menials deems itself our equal. And a dubious light is thrown on the management of an estate which fosters vagabonds.

Here Loyka's aged wife recognised to her surprise that a crisis had come, (*lit*: the sickle had come to the grindstone) and that she must not easily yield.

"We hand over the estate to you in excellent order, and it would be well if there were never any worse things to complain of," said she.

"Still, for my part, I could not bear to live in a building where everybody thought that he had the right of entrance, just as though it was an alehouse. Joseph will see to it that this rabble of vagabonds does not take up its quarters here a night longer," added the young bride with the same asperity.

"Joseph?" said Loyka's aged wife, and it was half an interrogation and half an asservation that Joseph would do no such thing. She pronounced it with a taunting smile as if she had said to Barushka "You are quite mistaken in Joseph, I assure you."

"Yes, Joseph," said Barushka.

"Joseph see to it that the musicians be warned off the farm who have been here all their lives," enquired the elder peasant woman in the same manner.

"What has been need not be always. There are things which after a time go out of fashion."

On this Joseph rose, and said "Pray, why should I not tell them? I will go and tell them at once."

Barushka looked at her mother-in-law as though she would say "Now, what have you got to say."—and she smiled tauntingly.

"And this is the girl who was willing to take me on her arms," thought the peasant woman to herself, and all at once she seemed to stand on the edge of an abyss.

And Joseph exactly, as though he and Barushka had just finished a game of cards, quitted the apartment and betook himself to the musicians.

"Will you be so good as to clear off at once from here," said he. "My wife does not wish to have people hanging about the place, and I do not wish it either."

Here the musicians felt as if they had received a severe shock. "Well, the Lord God reward you," said they, collecting their instruments in order that they might clear out, and they looked at Joseph as though they did not yet know whether it was jest or earnest. But it was earnest, for when they had gone out across the threshold he did not call them back nor when they crossed the courtyard, only the dogs whined a sad farewell to their old friends who went out by the gate on to the village green.

Joseph still remained by the gate until the musicians were fairly out of sight. And here the family of the kalounkar (tape pedlar), the cloth

pedlar, and all who were still present, looked at him in a kind of uncertainty to see whether it affected them also.

But Joseph did not leave them long in suspense. He leered at their things, he leered at them, and said "You must take it all away by this evening."

And here the cloth pedlar and the kalounkar looked at Joseph as though they would have said "Art thou that Joseph who sat here beside us, and listened to our story-telling."

And out loud the kalounkar said "I must entreat you, dear Mister Joseph, to ask our good old master and mistress to come hither that we may thank them for all their kindness. We do not venture to present ourselves in their apartments, and yet how can we go away without bidding them adieu?"

"There is no need, I assure you, I will give them any message you may choose to leave."

Here the old kalounkar said, almost crying, "Then tell them that the old kalounkar salutes them a hundred times, and that he thanks them for this roof which they have condescended to lend him for so many years, and that he never supposed that he would have to leave on the very day when he thought that a feast would be toward."

"I will tell him, I will not forget," said Joseph, cutting short further explanations, turned and went into the principal apartment.

And thus in a brief space of time were banished from the estate after the musicians, the kalounkar, the cloth pedlar, and the rest. At a moment which is the sweetest in human life, at a moment which every family scores in letters of gold on the page of its domestic history—at that moment in sorrow left this house several people who by right of dear custom considered that it was in part their home.

“Pray, where are the pedlar and the kalounkar being banished,” said old Loyka, seeing from the window how they were trailing across the courtyard with their wares.

“I have purged the chambers of them also,” said Joseph in elucidation. They were no better than the musicians, they had no right to hang about the place. If we young people have to take up our abode in the pensioner’s house we shall want these chambers for ourselves, and not for all sorts of underlings. It would be quite a sin if we were to tolerate them any longer.”

There cannot be a severer blow for an old man than to hear his past life and actions condemned in a single word; and this happened when Joseph declared Loyka’s previous system of hospitality to be a sin. And if there was anything praiseworthy at the Loykas’ it was, perhaps this, that their courtyard opened freely to shelter any who wished to enter it.

Here Loyka, as he sat, so he got up, burning with ill-repressed emotions, and said "How, pray, dare you act thus when these chambers are mine."

"If you are so sorry for your poor lodgers, call them back again," said Joseph with a mocking smile."

"And so I will call them back! Let one of the servants go and call them back."

"The servants will go when I send them, dear father," said Joseph with the same mocking smile. "The estate is once for all adjudged to me, and I think that the servants belong to me also."

"What is that!" shrieked old Loyka.

"Come, come, there is no need to explain what you know quite as well as I do; the servants belong to the estate, and the estate belongs to me."

"How so? And can I not venture to dismiss a servant if I choose," enquired old Loyka in just the same sharp tones as at first.

"You can, just as I can take him on again if I choose. If you send him away, perhaps I shall take him on again, if he suits me."

"And how, pray, dare you act thus when I am to be hospodar here six years longer?" And for this question he mustered all his self-importance.

"On my estate?" enquired Joseph drily.

"On thy estate!" screamed old Loyka, and here already his voice quivered with the welling tears. "And so, perhaps, you will tell me after a while that

I may drag myself off after yon musicians and kalounkari."

"Prythee, father, reflect, I have never said any such thing, although I cannot conceive how it is that these harpers have managed to grow so dear to your heart."

"May your tongue be turned to stone!" yelled old Loyka in wrath and anguish. At that moment he was scarcely to be recognised. He seated himself, and his tongue seemed turned to stone. He wished to speak and revolved in his mind this or that sentence, but all failed him, like a broken bough. His speech was thick as though he had been drinking, and as though he had to babble instead of speaking. Then he slouched, as we say, 'a peasant's ell' upon the table, leant his chin upon his hand, opened wide his eyes, half laughed and half wept at the same time, and said several times to himself "So it has come to this! so it has come to this!"

This altercation was sufficient for the first time. Motes seemed to flicker before Loyka's old eyes, and after a considerable pause, he said "Wife, lead me to bed." He did not even trust himself to go alone.

And the young folks took up their abode in the dwelling which had been previously occupied by their grandfather, which was called on the farm "the pension house" (*na vejminku : i.e. on condition*), and to which we will give the same name ;

the old people dwelt in the house they had hitherto occupied, which was called the farm house (na statku), and which we also will so name.

In the farm house the Loykas were to be hospodars for six years.

When harvest time drew near the farm-stead filled with harvesters and harvest women. It was gay in the courtyard below. Scythes and sickles clashed, rakes were being mended, everywhere there was a sound of hammering—just as if a clock was striking in the courtyard. Old Loyka, who had scarcely spoken five words since his son's wedding day, grew young again at the season of harvest. He was so accustomed to those two chambers by the coach-house, he used always to find there some wayfarer with whom he gladly conversed, and since his son's wedding day these chambers had been empty. And it oppressed him to have no one to converse with. But at harvest time the farmstead filled with people, moreover, harvest men and harvest women filled the two chambers, and so Loyka felt as though he had come to himself again. Now once more people went to and fro, the courtyard was full of voices and the noise of preparations—so old Loyka was once again contented. Often at early morning he might be seen pacing to and fro the courtyard, pleased with the flavour of his pipe, and with a settled smile upon his face.

During the few Sundays which had elapsed since his son's wedding day several years seemed to have settled upon his head ; to-day he felt as though in the flight of time those few years had been recalled. The harvesters and harvest women saluted him, smiled upon him, conversed with him, enquired of this and that, and old Loyka loved to converse. To-day he had been talking since early morning, he wished to compensate for the silence of several past weeks.

The harvesters were glad to go and seek employment at the Loykas' ; here they halted first when they came to the village—Loyka might choose the stoutest of them all. Also to-day he made his selection. Every harvester called him "pantata," and that pleased him ; it was evident, he thought within himself, that they still accounted him somebody on the estate, and that they maintained the same behaviour to him as in times gone by.

In times gone by the harvesters were proud to boast of their respect and reverence for the Loykas. Where in all the neighbourhood was the harvest home held so merrily as at the Loykas'. The harvesters were proud of it, and used to pride themselves on account of it in comparison with other harvesters.

"Well, pantata, this summer we shall have a merry harvest," said one harvester. "A new bride in the house—she will help it out."

"Ay, ay, just so," said old Loyka, and perhaps he did not exactly catch what the harvester had said, for the smile did not vanish from his face nor did he remove the pipe from his mouth.

"Since at harvest home we have to dance with the mistress of the house, this year we shall dance the summer out, having to tread a measure both with your good lady and the young gentleman's also," suggested another of the harvesters.

"Ay, ay, just so," said Loyka, and went on smiling; for it flattered him to think that the harvester had not forgotten his old mistress in the dance. "But this summer we have no musicians here," he added.

"And what of the musicians? They trail off like sparrows after grain," suggested the former harvester again.

And again old Loyka felt flattered to think that the harvester was not aware of the mode in which the musicians had been banished from the farm. "Just so, just so," continued old Loyka with a touch of self-satisfaction.

After this he gave his orders where and to what fields they were to go, and where they were to begin to reap. When he had delivered all his orders, lo! Joseph was at his side, and said "You will go to-day to cut beyond the meadow." And it was totally different from what his father wished them to do.

"How, pray, should they go beyond the meadows. The corn beyond the meadows can stand two days longer, but where I am sending them it cannot stand a day longer," objected his father.

"And when they have to go beyond the meadows," said Joseph, as if he had not the least heard what his father had said.

Here the harvesters stood uncertain in which direction they had to quit the courtyard.

"Well, then, go beyond the meadow," said Joseph's father with forced humility, not wishing that they should observe how impotent his commands had already become in presence of his son.

And so the harvesters went away to work in accordance with the young hospodar's orders. After this old Loyka said to the servants "You will stay at home and make straw bands."

"There is time enough for making straw bands," said Joseph. "Just go after the harvesters and help them in the field."

Here again the servants did not know whether they had to stop in the courtyard or go off to the field. They looked from Joseph to old Loyka. And Joseph, perceiving their indecision, said "Why do you hesitate? He that does not go to the field, let him look out for his place."

After this the servants departed.

"And who will make straw bands," asked old Loyka.

“Seeing that there is no great hurry,” said Joseph, “I think that you alone might manage to make them.”

“Be it so, be it so” ; said old Loyka with a laugh.

“And I have to make straw bands ? I have to be like a day labourer ?”

“Like a day labourer ? Surely you know that we all buckle to at harvest time ?” said Joseph.

“Just so. But *how* pray ? Am not I then still hospodar. Do you know, my dear son, that I never did such menial offices ?”

“If you are not willing to work, good. It is easy to see that you are but a half-hearted hospodar when you shirk in this manner.”

“It is the duty of the hospodar to act as overseer ; others can do manual work,” explained old Loyka.

“As for being overseer, that am I,” said Joseph.

“And I am like the fifth wheel on a carriage,” exclaimed Loyka angrily. But Joseph, just as if no words had passed between them, had already departed and left his father with a swarm of thoughts, so that he seemed to have his head full of drones and wasps. After this the father looked to heaven, and called aloud in an explosion of bitterness “Lord God ! grant me some inspiration that I may make this cruel son aware that I am his father.”

“Drop a little rat’s bane into his well,” murmured the voice of the irrepressible Vena. “Unless you

do so, he will soon close it against you as you closed it against your father, and then you will never have another chance of poisoning it for him, pantata.

Loyka scrutinised Vena, and seemed half as though he had heard half as though he had not heard him. "Oh! Vena," he said, "prythee tell me how gall diffuses itself through the body." And he took him and looked into his eyes as though he expected from him a serious answer.

"Let me fool you only just once," sneered Vena.

"Prythee, boy, fool on," entreated Loyka in a voice of humiliation that was almost pitiable.

"And why, pray, should I mix myself up in the concern," sneered Vena. "Of course your son will do the business for you. How, pray, could he fail to do it for you when you are, after all, but a pensioner on his bounty. You managed to fool your own father; why then should your son not manage to do the same by you? But what surprises me is—that in your son it begins so precious soon. You put the fool's cap on your father later. But who can change the course of nature? Now-a-days youth develops faster. Joseph, methinks, will have done with you sooner than you had done with your defunct father."

"Don't you know anything more to tell me than that," enquired old Loyka.

"I do know," said Vena. "But there is nothing in all that. You to talk about happiness, indeed.

You, verily! You will be hospodar six years longer, you will dwell in the farm house, you are still master there. Oh! oh! things will grow worse and worse until they crack, and until you are mast-headed on yonder balcony whence your father looked at the farm house, because he did not dare to cross the courtyard."

As Vena said these words Barushka came out bearing a message "from Joseph, you know, papa dear," to the effect that during harvest time the old people could take up their abode with her mother in the pension house, and that the young folk would shift into the farm house. "We have so much to do, and it is so tiring to run to the pension house and then back again to the farm," she remarked. After this she marched off as though she had already gained her father-in-law's consent to this arrangement.

"Look, look, yonder, pantata, the maids are already heaving you out of the nest," said Vena. And forth from the farm house the maid servants were already carrying Loyka's furniture.

"So! you are to be shelved instanter" said Vena. "See! see! I did think that they would have waited a little longer. You did bear with your father in the house a certain time. But youth develops faster now-a-days. See! see!"

Old Loyka turned his eyes to the entrance hall. "Dear Vena," he said, and took him by the hand. "Come and help me, and let us make mince meat of it all."

“ That will be of small avail now ; once you are fairly out of the house, it will be hard to get back again. You will have to go to law with your son. Before judgment is given in your case, the six years are out, and meantime you can be thankful for the pension house. But, of course, you know how long a law suit takes, for you were still at law with your father while he was being buried. The one thing you must pray for is that your son may have a son again, and that this son may one day pay his father out for your wrongs. But you understand all about it.”

“ But come and help me ! ” he took Vena by the hand as though nothing would move him from his determination.

“ Come along ! come along ! pantata,” said Vena, holding himself in readiness. “ I will catch hold of your chests and cupboards lest they take flight, and you shall lamm into them.”

And old Loyka went into the entrance hall and began to turn everything upside down, then he took a chair in his hands and shouted into the inner rooms “ I will break his head who takes anything of mine out of the house.”

At these words they ceased to carry his things out of the house. Perhaps the sight of old Loyka somewhat softened them, and perhaps they deemed it prudent to desist when old Loyka so passionately set himself in opposition.

Here Vena also took a chair, seated himself upon it, and invited Loyka to sit down on the one which he held in his hand, and said "Let us seat ourselves at your house, pantata."

His master needed no second invitation, he seated himself on the chair which he held in his hands, and was once more silent.

"You see, pantata, you would not even have known that you could sit down in your own house if I had not told you so. When you do not know where to dwell come to me and I will tell you," said Vena. After a pause he added, as though well pleased with the thought to which he gave utterance, "Indeed I am glad that we can sit at your house." "But do you know what? you would not the least dare to go with me into the inner apartments."

"What is that you say?" and Loyka rose from his chair.

"That you dare not go with me into the inner room."

"We'll see about that," answered Loyka with great vehemence. And he had already taken Vena by the hand and said "Come, Vena, with me into the farm house, thou art my guest there."

And they entered the farm house.

"Look, mama, I am bringing you a visitor," said Loyka to his wife, without noticing Barushka, who was present. "He is helping us to ballast the furniture which the sweet Barushka finds so much

in her way, that she allowed it to float out of the house."

Barushka paid not the slightest heed to her father-in-law, and let fly straight at Vena. "Clear out of the house, thou impudent rogue! It were indeed a disgrace, if fellows like thee should be admitted even into our best drawing room."

Loyka laughed. "Meseems, Vena, she doth not appreciate thee. But seat thyself, boy, here by me. You shall see, I will not let them bundle thee out just as they are bundling out yonder packing cases. Just seat thyself, thou art at my house. The dear young folk have already made a clean sweep of a good many things both from the farm house and from the two chambers, but none shall dare to brush thee off, no one, you understand, no one.

At this Barushka, turning to her father-in-law, remarked "For my part I thought that we had enough to do with one fool in the house; but you, pantata, must e'en bring in another one."

"So! I am a fool! possibly, young lady, possibly," said old Loyka with a curse, took the chair on which he was sitting in his hands and would, perhaps, have hurried after Barushka and, perhaps, have struck her a heavy blow. But at that moment he stopped short, and said "No, just because we are at home and she is our guest, I do not dare to forget myself."

For that time, at any rate, the old Loykas were left in peace in their farm house.



CHAPTER VI.

NOW occurred in the farm house a trying period which it is a painful task to have to chronicle. And it is the more painful, because in the Loykas' farm may be seen a picture of a hundred other farms in which similar scenes are enacted, only slightly differing in their details.

It is, perhaps, the most painful thing for a writer when in his pursuit of truth he has to delineate nauseous realities.

Among all social questions there is, perhaps, no single one which can elicit in men so profound a sentiment of indignation as the question of the vejmkinkar (pensioner).

We need not go beyond the confines of Europe if we wish to discover slaves and slave masters. We have them at home, each of us in his own village, and what is more disgusting is that the son is the slave master, the father is the slave; and what is still most disgusting, the law sanctions this relation, approves it, ay, incribes it on the public rolls like a commercial treaty. The greatest popular immorality is carried on before our very eyes, nature debauched

and trampled under foot, is distorted into what is unnatural and monstrous. The law allows that sons should take upon themselves the part of criminals, and the sons wittingly, ay, hanging their heads in shame the while, hasten to adapt themselves to the criminal's vocation : custom and habit consecrate the deed, and baffled nature loses here even her power of speech.

But to our tale. The harvest home at the Loykas' passed as gloomily as Ash-Wednesday. In the farm house there was not a cheerful face, the old folks shunned the young, the young couple avoided the old ones. They never looked at one another if they could help it, nor, if they could avoid it did they speak to another. And if they did look at one another or spoke to one another they neither returned the look nor listened with the least satisfaction.

Just as in years gone by the harvesters used to gather eagerly to the Loykas', so this summer every moment they spent here was a torment to them. And they heartily thanked the Lord God when it was all over, and they might go thence. "I do not come here again," they said to one another. "Not if I have to look for work I know not in what village."

It is true puncheons of ale were rolled into the courtyard for their behoof, and they were given a glass or two of rosolek, but not a single face dis-

played any affability either in looks or words. They had said to their good old master, out of politeness, that this summer they would have two mistresses to dance with, and lo! they had not one. The harvesters and harvest women were glad when they could disperse to their different homes.

And then when the harvest was over the relation between the young and old people became further strained, until it could be strained no further, and the only question was when it would be altogether sundered.

When after harvest the fields had to be put in furrow, and old Loyka ordered the servants to go to such and such a field, Joseph came, cancelled his orders, and told them not to go where his father bade them, but to go somewhere else.

When old Loyka bade them sow rye in this or that field, Joseph bade them take the rye into a different field, and sow wheat in the other.

If old Loyka told them to reap beyond the meadow, Joseph vowed there was time enough for the crops beyond the meadow, and so they were to work in the field.

Thus things went on until at last the servants paid no heed at all to old Loyka's bidding, but at once questioned their young hospodar to see whether he approved of their old master's orders or whether he would wish to cancel them. Only what the young hospodar ordered was a valid order. And

thus it came to pass in the course of a very short time that, although according to contract and the letter of the law, old Loyka had reserved the right of still managing the estate for six years; already at the beginning of the first year his right of management was snatched out of his hands, and Joseph virtually became sole lord and master of the estate.

And what took place between the male portion of the family, had its counterpart also in the relations subsisting between Loyka's aged wife and Barushka. No maid-servant whom Barushka did not wish to have in the house was permitted to stay there, nor would she have been had Loyka's aged wife moved heaven and earth to retain her. And there was not a maid-servant on the place who did not consider Barushka as her mistress.

And so, then, the hospodarship was completely monopolised by the young folk. Some points old Loyka yielded for the sake of "divine peace," some because yield he must, others because they were taken from him—until, at last, no one troubled themselves about his whims and wishes. And so not six months of the reserved six years had elapsed and old Loyka was deprived of all his rights of hospodarship save the right to dwell in the farm house; and how secure his tenure of the farm house had become we already know.

Old Loyka must have gone to law with his son at every step if he had wished to maintain his position.

When he wished to sell rye to the corn factor, he became aware that Joseph had already sold it underhand, when he thought that some samples might be left over the winter the merchant's agents came and began to fill their carts with it, because Joseph had sold it also. And so now i' faith I know not what still remained to old Loyka to testify that he was still master.

Such were the conditions amid which Frank grew up, and thus he began to feel ill at ease at home. Everything there was altered and in confusion. After his grandfather's funeral he had led Staza about the courtyard and showed her where his grandfather had once dwelt, and which was the abode of the kalounkar (tape pedlar) and strolling fiddlers—but now all must be re-christened.

Into those chambers he had conducted Staza when he had invited her to the farm, and they had still remained almost untouched since the banishment of their previous occupants, here he and Staza could still feel at home, just as when they seated themselves in a grave at the cemetery. Here they could tell over to one another all the stories they knew, and thus story-telling was still not wholly banished from the farm. It had dwindled to the youngest member of the family, and to a most modest audience.

Sometimes Staza was the teller of the story and Frank formed the audience, at other times Frank was the narrator and Staza the listener.

The growing difference between father and son had one advantage for Frank, if we can call it an advantage, viz., that Frank was pretty well overlooked by both of them, and being left to himself might draw profit from this freedom. That is to say he might so far profit himself, that he need not be a witness of all that took place in the farm, might wander at will through the fields, might go to the cemetery for Staza, and lead her wherever he chose.

We are not among those who think that home is always the best place for children. On the contrary, it is frequently the greatest blessing for a child if he be freed from the fetters of home and be left to mother nature and her relation chance, that they may develop what home cannot impart, and what, indeed, it often thoroughly perverts.

These children, at all events, found together away from home what at home they had lacked. Nature and chance lovingly made good to them the deficiencies of home life. We mean by nature the apparition of the heavens, and we mean by chance heaven's divine providence, and we have two instructors with which few homes can be compared.

Staza took him with her to the cemetery, and there they beheld face to face the serious side of life. Frank took Staza into the fields and to the open wold, and they recognised the smiles of the green turf on the earth, the azure blue of the firmament of

heaven, the laverock which fluttered like a singing messenger from one to the other.

Staza led Frank to the cemetery whenever a new grave was delved. There they heard from the lips of Bartos the life history of the defunct, there they squatted together, slept side by side, and were "faithful little spirits." Frank again reconducted Staza to the field when he found a new bird's nest, when he had discovered any young quails, or when he wished to show her how the partridges sit. Here again he narrated to her the whole life history of these creatures, so far as he knew it, and when they sat by the hedgerow during the narration, it seemed to them like fairy land.

Staza came for Frank whenever the bees winged their way to the clover which bloomed on his grandfather's grave, in order, as she said, that Frank might see whether they were the bees from his grandfather's hives. And then Frank sat beside his grandfather's grave and Staza beside the grave of her mother, and they were at home.

Then again Frank led Staza to the farmstead, to those hives which were now his own, and they observed in which direction the bees flew away and whether they went to his grandfather's grave. Then the two children settled themselves in the chambers by the coach house, and burst forth into story telling just as musicians burst forth into song and melody.

And to tell the truth these two chambers at the Loykas' farm seemed steeped in fairy lore and ballad history. He who stepped into them involuntarily remembered things which he had here heard from the musicians and from the kalounkar, and scarcely had he seated himself before it all seemed to come upon him so that he was compelled to relate it all again. Something of this kind Frank and Staza experienced when they went into the burial ground and when they seated themselves in a fresh dug grave. Even there on that little hillock into which the grave was heaped some one seemed to sit with a harp and to softly sweep the strings.

And somehow Staza so aptly interpreted it all, that it seemed to Frank that never in his life had he heard such sweet and reasonable discourse.

After that they consecrated with their visits every hedgerow in the fields. And that spot where either of them had narrated some particularly pretty story was, in a manner, the source of that story. The circumstance that had been related was dear to them, and so also was the spot on which it had been related. Whenever they came to that spot a tender feeling was awakened in their minds, as often as this feeling was awakened within them, the place became still dearer, until it was to them like a consecrated shrine, without masonry, however, and without pictures. Many such shrines had they carefully chosen, resting places and trysting places, fringed

with green turf, and above each bent a heaven aglow with the sun's rays and saturated with its smiles.

Sometimes they sat upon the graves like two living monuments—cheerful monuments, however, and in their young memory and on their young souls were inscribed even solemn matters. And Frank was flattered when Bartos, the gravedigger, made him the auditor of his narrations ; it seemed to the boy just as though the dead grandfather continued to play his part in Bartos, it was too a certain mark of distinction to be made the confidant of a man so sedate and, moreover, the greatest athlete of the county.

Sometimes again the two children sat by the hedgerow among the rye like two quails, only that they broke in upon the clicking music of the cricket with human voices, and upon the buzzing of flies and bees. And this specially delighted Staza, who felt just as though she were at a concert, and as though she must laugh and whistle and press Frank's hand. It was dull, though only at times, for a mind so very young to be always yonder among the graves, and Staza's feet grew tired of wandering about the prim and sombre walks of the cemetery. But here where everything made holiday, look whithersoever she would, she likewise made holiday, just as when the lenten season has passed the young sleeper awakens with a glad hurrah.

At first Frank did not at all comprehend why as soon as ever Staza entered the fields she grew so full of mirth and rapture. Her little eyes flashed playfully, she tripped along and skipped about as though she were on wires, her face joy itself, her words like songs. But it could not be otherwise—man was not created to be exclusively sad and serious—gaiety is just as necessary as the sunlight ; the young heart of little Staza was a proof of this : unconsciously she wished to compensate herself for all from which, equally unconsciously, she had been hitherto excluded.

But later Frank ceased to wonder at her gaiety ; he also was himself saturated with it. When he went to the cemetery for Staza all the way thither he rejoiced beforehand at the thought of her enjoyment, and looked forward to her skips of delight and cries of pleasure, sometimes he half skipped about himself when he thought how she would skip about, sometimes he half began to carol when he thought how she would sing and carol.

And so Frank began to acquire in the parish the reputation of a vagabond who could scarcely be tethered to his home, and we cannot gainsay the correctness of this opinion, he was a vagabond, and became more and more of one every day, so that already he found very little pleasure in his home, and was glad if only he could sneak away out of sight somewhere behind the barn. Sometimes when

he went with Staza and they could not esconce themselves in the two chambers by the coach-house he turned away with her at his side, and they explored some choice nook outside the village. If anyone had enquired of Frank what his home looked like, he would only have described those two chambers in the courtyard—nothing else belonged to his conception of home, and no one was associated with these chambers—neither father nor mother nor brother. All that appertained to them was that they were empty, and that he was in them and that Staza was in them with him.

Later his parents wished to attach him to his home, but it was already too late. They set him work to do a-field, and there he went willingly enough. But if he had to work in the courtyard, he soon sought the easiest means of escape into the country ; and when once he was out of doors and in the country outside, any one might be sure of finding him on the road to the burial ground, unless he were hiding by the hedgerow or in some newly delved grave.

And now even Joseph began to chaff him for his vagabond ways, and his parents could not deny that their elder son had some foundation for his sarcasms. But we know very well that Joseph was always the spoilt child of the house, and that Frank was the fifth wheel of the coach ; and therefore Joseph's oracular sentences carried no great weight with

them. And when Joseph told his father and mother quite seriously that they were teaching Frank to be a tramp, Loyka strictly enjoined upon his younger son to stay at home and not to leave it any more.

But even these injunctions soon ceased to be taken seriously. Frank obeyed for a day or two, and after a day or two was already far away from home without his parents paying any heed to him.

Old Loyka, indeed, already began to grow rather blind to everything novel that originated around him, and Frank's vagabond habits were something novel. Moreover he himself was too much afflicted by the relation subsisting between himself and Joseph, and was too full of it, with the best intentions in the world, to have much room left in his heart for Frank.

And here we must say, once for all, that old Loyka's power of resistance which had in some respects so stoutly confronted Joseph's encroachment upon its rights, now began in everything to slacken at all points. He felt himself crushed and broken, he already found but few sources of support within himself, and thus he willed and acted only by halves. Each new motive entered into him only as it were by one ear, to vanish again immediately by the other. And so it was that he ordered Frank not to quit the house, as to whether his son obeyed his orders or not, the father had already ceased to trouble himself.

And then one day in the presence of Frank was enacted between the old folks and the young one of those scenes which were already of as frequent occurrence at the farm as the Lord's prayer in the Church Service. For, one day, the kalounkar came to the Loykas', not to be received there as a guest, but only that he might look once more for old acquaintance sake upon his old friend. And on this occasion Frank saw that old Loyka wept and that the kalounkar also wept. Then old Loyka invited the kalounkar to stay with him in the two chambers at least for the night. The kalounkar excused himself, till at last Loyka drew him almost by force across the courtyard. But when he wished to open the door there was no key, and when he asked for the key he was told that the young hospodar had it and, so they said, had locked the two chambers in order that Frank should not introduce into them any of the servants who had once been dismissed from the house.

On this old Loyka commanded that the key should be brought, but no one could find it. And after he had thus waited a long time and had joked freely in order that the kalounkar might not perceive that he was no longer master on his estate, and when still no one brought the key, Loyka turned, caught up a cleaver from somewhere in the yard, and battered in the doors of the two chambers. When they crackled, it seemed as if the whole build-

ing would tumble down, and when at last the doors gave way and the two chambers were free of access and Loyka stood like a conqueror at the threshold leaning upon his cleaver, and shouted that he was still master in his own house and so let his friends make themselves at home—then, to his astonishment, he became aware that he was addressing people who were no longer there. For the kalounkar was already far away from the courtyard, and Frank had vanished with him. After this a discordant din of voices reached his ears from the balcony above—the voices of the young folks, to whom Loyka replied throughout the whole dialogue from the courtyard, frequently threatening them with the cleaver which he held in his hand.

And this time Frank vanished from the farm for good. When several days elapsed and he did not re-appear, the Loykas thought that it was one of his usual rambles, and that they need only send to Bartos at the cemetery to enquire for him, and they would get Frank home again. And when he still did not come after several days they sent a message to Bartos just to say that Frank had still not returned. After this old Loyka went himself to the cemetery, but when he saw the grandfather's grave, he knelt beside it and prayed a thousand times for forgiveness. He almost forgot exactly why he had gone there. And it was Bartos who first reminded him. "You are looking for Frank, I daresay?

Certainly he is not at his home, for it is now a week since he has been at our house."

It was exactly a week since Frank had quitted his home.

"But I heard say that he had gone with the kalounkar (tape pedlar), and that he was walking the world with him," said Bartos to the astonished parent.

"With the kalounkar? Going all over the world with him?" said Loyka, repeating the words of the gravedigger.

When he returned home he told his wife what he had heard, and they despatched Vena to look for the kalounkar and bring Frank home from him.

Vena departed and came back after several weeks with the news that Frank had tramped it with the kalounkar, but then, so it was said, he had met with a harper, had quitted the kalounkar, and gone with the harper.

"Dolt! idiot!" said Loyka, "then you ought to have discovered the harper and brought back Frank. And so begin the search again—the sooner, the better—and without Frank do not venture near my house."

Vena departed and found the harper, but Frank, so it was said, had gone off with a fiddler and now, doubtless, was once more with the kalendar. "Pantata," explained Vena, "I should never have ventured home again as long as I lived, for no one

will find Frank again till the day of judgment. He goes off with the people he meets, and we should have to run the circuit for ever of all the wayfarers who ever passed the night here, for it is with these he roves the world.

Although it might have seemed that such news would have not a little ruffled Loyka, such was not the case. Hearing with whom Frank roved the world, he in a sort of way reconciled himself to the young renegade : " They dare not come to us, so he has gone to them," reasoned Loyka ; this appeared to be so certainly true that this truth even, in some sort, gave him satisfaction ; at all events Frank published to the world the fact that these humble dependants were no longer domesticated at the Loykas' ; at all events he, in some sort, incriminated Joseph for having so ruthlessly stripped their home of its previous mirth and jollity.

" He is not in bad hands," thought Loyka to himself, and out loud he said " The roving young scamp, but I suppose he knows what a flogging he will get when he comes home again."

But Frank knew nothing about a flogging and returned home no more. Then more messengers besides Vena were despatched from the farm, and all returned with the news that where he last was heard of, he was no longer to be found, and that they could not track him further.



CHAPTER VII.

IT drew nigh to Easter Day when old Loyka said to his wife, "For my part I no longer wish to be hospodar, but would fain retire altogether to the pension house."

On this Loyka's wife said "And are almost five years of our hospodarship to be so completely cancelled. That would be just as though we were to take flight from the farm house."

"And what are we in the farm house? Dost think that we are still hospodars here?" enquired Loyka with a kind of angry fervour. And on this he began to explain how Joseph began to take everything upon himself. "And pray what value is set upou you as mistress, I wish to know," he added. And when he had said all he meant to say, he spat. After this he added "Thou hast taught thy son these manners, that spoilt pet of thine."

Loyka's wife felt the bitterness of this reproach; she was silent and furtively wiped away a tear, and for a long time sought in vain for a reply. "At all events it was not I who taught the young bride, and she has corrupted Joseph," said Loyka's wife at last.

That is as much as to say "It was I who chose the young bride, and therefore I am to blame for it all," said Loyka in an access of fury.

On this Loyka's wife was again silent, and secretly wiped away a second salt tear.

Then Loyka paced twice up and down the apartment. His head was bowed, his two eyes measured his steps, his hands were lodged behind his back, and the fingers of one hand tapped on the fingers of the other. Then he halted in front of his wife, drew himself up, and said "And do you know what is the best of this pretty business? That we both richly deserve to be treated thus. But thou more than I, because I only obeyed thee when thou didst hound me on against my father. But now things are reversed, fate has singled me out for punishment, you are not worthy its attention."

Here Loyka's wife no longer stretched out her hand to wipe away a tear, but said to Loyka, flinging her words into his very face, "If thou thinkest that it has come upon us in consequence of our ill-dealing toward thy father—good, let us bear it; for my part I will not say thee nay, and I do not wish to shirk my share of the blame, nor would I ever shuffle it off myself on to thee."

"Well said, wife," responded Loyka, paced once to and fro the apartment, and as he did so, muttered "Let us bear it, let us bear it, if thou so wishest, let us bear it, and let us begin from this very day."

I, in sooth, have already borne it for a long time, but since thou so wishest, let us begin from this very day in earnest. But this I say to thee : whatsoever comes to pass, pity me thou must not, neither will I pity thee, that I think thou desirest not at my hands."

On this he looked out of the window, and seeing Joseph going across the courtyard, summoned him, and forthwith again returned to the apartment. "And so it is beginning already," said he, just as if it was the eve of a kind of battle.

After a brief moment Joseph came, and here old old Loyka was already seated by the table with some solemnity, because such an act could not be completed without a certain amount of ceremony.

"I have summoned thee," began Loyka, "or more properly speaking I have begged thee to come, since I have already no more power to command, and I know not whether thou would'st obey. But I and thy mother, look you, desire to place the hospodarship in thy hands and Barushka's. And thou art aware that in the agreement we have reserved to ourselves in case of such a contingency to wit : that we should quit the hospodarship within the course of six years :—to be rendered to us by thee a quarter of all the produce of the farm. So, then, I ask thee in the presence of the Lord God, wilt thou conscientiously fulfil thy part of the contract ?"

Joseph, at these words, merely smiled like a man whose object is accomplished—an object which he had long had in view. For I think the reader will agree with us so far as this—that all the wrongs which Joseph heaped upon his father only aimed at making the hospodarship a burden to him, so that he might voluntarily surrender it of himself. And now his father surrendered it, voluntarily surrendered it, be it understood, because surrender it he must.

“Why should I not fulfil my portion of the contract, and give you what belongs to you,” said Joseph. “It is understood, of course, that you will also contribute a fourth part of all the outlay on the farm. And if the produce is scanty, your share will be scanty, too, and if the outlay be greater, then you will have to contribute more. All just as the Lord God blesses our undertakings.” Joseph said all this smilingly, and as he pronounced the last sentence his lip almost curled, as though he said only in different words, “I have you in a trap, dear father; I shall give you just as much as I choose.”

Old Loyka certainly perfectly well understood that his son led him thus to a kind of chasm, and now said to him “Leap!” He felt it but too well, even some motes danced before his eyes, even his head, went round a little. But sometimes a man, in presence of very important events stands as it were blindfold, if not actually blind: he knows that he is

standing above an abyss, but still he says " I leap ! " and he leaps.

" Why should we discuss the matter further," said old Loyka, " it is all made out and signed in the lawyer's books, and that is the agreement. What is there written is valid."

" Undoubtedly," said Joseph, and again his lip curled.

" I had further reserved the right to us old folk," continued Loyka, " of dwelling in the farm house during the remainder of the six years and during that time Frank was to mess with you young people."

" That is hard lines for the estate," said Joseph again, just as if he wished to show that he was but trifling with his father, and that he had long ago preconcerted everything in his own mind. " No, no, that will not do at all. To manage the estate from the pension house in which we can scarce turn round will not do at all, and I am sure that as hospodar you will recognize as much yourself. As to Frank it will be time enough to settle who is to feed and lodge him when we have him at home again. For I certainly am not going to carry his victuals after him when I have no notion where he is."

And thus old Loyka was practically chuzzled out of both his conditions, and felt little inclination to impose others. " And so you think we must be

banished to the pension house," he said, but only in order to make a remark. "Well, if you think so we will be banished to the pension house," he added. "Dost hear, aged wife of my bosom, we are banished—ousted." And he said it in a tone of voice which implied "Misfortune begins from this moment."

Loyka's wife had turned away, and did not answer.

On this Loyka stepped close to his son's side and began to speak again somewhat ceremoniously, as if to mark the importance of the present step of which, however, he was no longer master. "Thou seest, Joseph, thy mother: look at her. Her hair is already streaked with grey, just as my hair is streaked with grey. Thou wilt be hospodar here now, and if thou thinkest that thou canst safely wrong me, thy father, the Lord God forgive thee. But look that thou dost not wrong thy mother. She has suffered much for thy sake, she has loved thee all too dearly, and therefore wrong her not."

At these words Loyka's wife wiped her eyes (if it is possible to say so) outloud; that is to say she sobbed all the while as if she wished to demonstrate that her son had already frequently done her wrong, Loyka was meek and mild, and Joseph did not answer.

Only after a pause, Joseph enquired: "Then when would you like to shift your things?"

“ Well, what thinkest thou, aged wife of my bosom, when are we to be banished,” enquired old Loyka.

“ Well, if it has to be, perhaps the sooner it is done the better,” said Joseph’s mother, thinking at the same time that her son would say that there was no need of shifting just yet.

“ As you will,” said Joseph. “ I will send the servants at once to help you to remove your things.” He turned the matter in this way, so that he might still appear in the light of a dutiful son.

“ Send them, Joseph, send them,” said old Loyka, and on this Joseph departed.

But old Loyka did not tarry for the servants. He at once began to drag from the wall chests and drawers, and to remove the chairs from their places by the table, and all in as much haste as though an enemy was approaching and everything had to be cleared out of the way within an hour.

Then came the servants into the apartment to assist ; but old Loyka thanked them with a kind of mock reverence for their zeal, and requested them to send Vena to him who would help him best, and would also season his work with some wise saws and maxims.

So, then, Vena came, and scarcely had he appeared in the doorway before he exclaimed : “ See, see, pantata, might you not just as well have let yourself be ousted that day when your son had got you half

turned out of doors. What work we had to set all straight again—and all in vain. But if it must be so, then the Lord God help you.”

Old Loyka paused beside a chest, and said “Prythee, how sayst thou? It seems to me that thou dost completely pity me?”

“Pantata,” answered Vena, “I do pity you. I pity every one as soon as he is pensioned off. I ever jeered at you when you evilly entreated the pensioner on your bounty, and I pitied him, your own father, while it went on. If I could have remembered how your father played the hospodar, I should have pitied the pensioner on his bounty, and if I live to see Joseph pensioned off, I shall begin to pity him, and I shall give it his successor—perhaps his son. Oh! ye peasant proprietors! how ill you regulate your affairs. Come move out of the way old tea-chest,” he said, turning abruptly towards Loyka, as though he meant him by this expression.

“Pray, what do mean by that,” said Loyka, and nudged himself into a certain amount of good humour and tried to smile.

“I mean by that, that you are the principal piece of furniture which hampers Joseph here, and that if you would walk off to the lumber room all the rest might be permitted to remain,” sneered Vena.

“Listen, aged wife of my bosom, listen to this sapient Solomon. So long we have had him in the house and never knew his worth. We have to be

banished the farm in order to duly appreciate his wisdom. Without our banishment this well of wisdom would have been forever sealed. Ha! ha! and so I am the principal piece of furniture," laughed old Loyka. "And, pray, what have you got to say of my aged wife yonder."

"She requites you for your young days of courtship. Then you were always following after her, now she follows after you. But do you know what is a sad thing."

"Well, what," enquired old Loyka.

"That it is only grey-headed eld which tramps it to that dog kennel which you call a pension house. It were better to begin more timely when a man is yet stout enough to bear his ills. But for an old man to take up his wallet and go a-begging—fie!"

"How am I going a-begging?" retorted Loyka, and here he felt as though he were dying of impatience to hear a little more.

"You? God protect you? In your family begging and being pensioned off are one and the same thing. And in order that I may prove to you that even without begging you can steal a march upon your son, intercede with him in my behoof that I may not be expelled from those two chambers by the coach-house. For, if not, you will not have a single living soul in whom to confide your sorrows."

"So, then, you think, Vena, I shall want someone in whom to confide my sorrows."

“That you will, pantata, that you will. I know it from your own poor father. When he suffered most at your hands, and got a sight of me it was just as though he had bitten honey. Oh ! You have no idea at all how I sweetened his life for him. I was more than sauce and seasoning,” said Vena proudly.

“Listen, aged wife of my bosom, this affects your credit in the kitchen,” laughed old Loyka.

“It affects you both, pantata,” said Vena, quickly correcting him. “But, of course, you will soon understand it all yourselves. When your dinner is brought to you up aloft yonder without salt or sauce or seasoning, neither your son nor your son’s wife will salt or sauce it for you ; then you just call down the back stairs ‘Oh ! Vena, come and be our sauce and seasoning !’ And I shall understand all that you have need of. Only, prythee, guarantee me those two chambers, or verily it will go hard with you.”

“The two chambers ? If I had to take thee with me aloft into the pension house, thou should’st never quit the estate, Vena,” answered Loyka sententiously.

“I have your word, at all events,” said Vena, thanking him. “So now we may proceed with your banishment. I thought it important to insist upon the matter of my two chambers, because it is possible that to-day you will march across yon courtyard for the last time in your life.”

“And, prythee, how may that be I should like to know, thou sapient Solomon?” asked Loyka.

“As thus. If you have not in your written agreement reserved to yourself the right of walking across your son’s courtyard, who knows whether he will permit it. You will have to creep along the roof like grimalkin when she goes to the witches frolic,” and Vena laughed.

“It is not necessary to put such things into a written agreement,” said Loyka, with a kind of angry fervour.

“Oh! of course not, of course not, seeing that what stands in the written agreement is never carried out, the less there the better. Your own father never dared to draw water from your well, and I think his right to do so was reserved in the written agreement.”

“It wasn’t,” cut in Loyka.

“Oh! it wasn’t; then see here. No doubt of it you have it in your agreement that you may draw water, but have forgot in the same agreement to reserve to yourself the right of walking across the courtyard to fetch the water. But do you know what, pantata, if it comes to that, I will carry you across the courtyard on my back, for then no one will be able to prove that you walked across the courtyard, and as for me I have still the right to carry on my back what I please.”

“Thou art all salt and sauce, boy, sauciness and seasoning,” said Loyka to cut short the conversation, and for a moment his breast heaved as though he was on the point of weeping. But after all nothing came of it except laughter, only that behind this laughter that weeping was quite apparent: tears and weeping looked through a curtain of laughter, and whoever saw it felt little disposed to laugh.

And so they were banished from the farm house. Loyka and Loyka’s wife cast a last lingering look over that apartment where from their youth until now they had tasted all the sweets and sorrows of life, and which they were perhaps leaving for ever. On some estates a beggar has easier access to the farm house than the vejmkinkar (pensioner). And if he goes there once in a way, even his step, even his look seems to sicken everyone—without careful fostering, his inclination to repeat the visit soon languishes.

“There is only one thing I am sorry for,” said Vena, when the greater part of the furniture had been already carried out before the threshold. “And that is that there are no longer any musicians at the farm—how they would have beguiled our transit to the pension house! Those were the times! When at a touch of those strings everything was tootling and jigging on the farm, and even sorrow put on a smart frock!”

“Dost think those musicians remember me?” enquired Loyka, who to-day, as he had been for some time, was as it were held a prey to a sort of childish meekness.

“Do I think they remember you? They put you into popular songs. The song of the vejmkinkar (pensioner) will be given at every market in the district, and then they will point to Frank as a living witness of the truth of the ballad. And the kalounkar and the rest of them will equally testify to its truth. And so, then, the Lord help us on our way without music since there is none to be gotten. Well-a-day, I should have been glad to have seen one thing. That is I should have liked to see you either laugh or cry, for in heaven, ’tis said, tears and laughter are worth just as much as music. But there is no laughter in you, and crying is not worth while.”

Thus the Loykas were banished from the farm house in sorrow, which they sought to screen with laughter, but did not much succeed.

In the meantime, the young folks were shifting their quarters in a very different frame of mind. Yonder from the pension house, the servants were dragging down furniture of all sorts, and laughter—genuine laughter—accompanied every step. Joseph looked as though he had been polished for the occasion. Barushka was just as if it were her wedding day. Their every step, their every word betrayed that they were the victors, that the old people were

vanquished and subjugated. Learn it ye aged ! ye are vanquished and subjugated ! Here every shadow of tenderer feeling was out of place, Barushka and Joseph had won a preconcerted game, and the player who has won is always the only one who laughs.

Even Kmoch, Barushka's father, had already received intelligence that they were shifting into the farm house, and already betook himself thither and helped the young folks to laugh. He went to old Loyka and with a sleek smile expatiated on the wisdom his friend had shown in this step. "You know," says Kmoch, "the hospodarship should *always* belong to the young folk who have energy and versatility ; but old people, you know, ought to rest, they deserve a brief breathing space before they go hence——" and more to the same effect.

Old Loyka at this speech collected a few words as we collect out of our pockets a few spare kreutzers wherewith to rid ourselves of a beggar. "I had already firmly decided upon this," said he, "and, what is more, I never alter my mind."

"I trust not, indeed," said Kmoch, "for what end will it serve to change your mind yet again."

"He thinks, I beg his pardon, pantata Kmoch thinks that only from to-day you have grown wise enough to know from its beak where the chaffinch is sitting and how to sprinkle salt on the hare's tail," put in Vena. "It is dearly bought praise, pantata, when you must deprive yourself of a farm house to

get the reputation of being a wise man. As soon as the sacrifice is made, then all goes well, then all men praise you who haven't a notion after all why all the fine estates are in the market."

"What do you mean?" said Kmoch, turning angrily to Vena; "a pretty notion: a fine estate in the market. I must say, pantata, you have harboured a very impudent gang of servants here, and glad I am that the young folk have made a clean sweep of them." "As for thee," said he turning again to Vena, "thou art not hammered on to the house with a nail nor glued there with mortar so as to be irremovable." A pretty notion. "His fine estates in the market!"

"For all that you will not oust me just yet," said Vena proudly. "I and your good gossip Loyka have made a compact, and I am not to venture to leave the house, and if it comes to that he goes and I stay here. Isn't that true?" said he, appealing to Loyka.

Nothing was left for Kmoch but to disdain to carry on the conversation further which, indeed, he did: only he still hinted almost involuntarily that Loyka ought not to lower himself with such a man.

This provoked Vena. "Not lower himself. If no one had picked you out of the mire, you would never have passed for so much. Only do not imagine that I do not see through you. I know you by heart, carry it off how you will. Look you! you have got

your daughter on to a farm just as if a servant had made his daughter a queen, and now to-day my lord has a hundred tastes to sit on the throne himself also. Not lower oneself, indeed!" and similar things said Vena, though now Kmoch no longer heard them. He had again departed to the young folk where they looked on the world with a different pair of eyes.

It seemed as though only to-day the new mistress celebrated her entry into the farm house. As it fell out, so it fell out. Hogsheads of beer were rolled into the courtyard; rosolek was produced, the servants were invited to it, drank, whistled, laughed, and sang, so that even people from the village collected about the courtyard, placed themselves in the gateway, and some even posted themselves in the courtyard, just as on the day when the news of the death of Frank's grandfather lured them hither, and they had talked to another about the life of the deceased.

They came just as if to-day there was another corpse at the farmstead, and it was old Loyka who was being buried in the pension house; perhaps he was not much unlike, not much better off than a corpse.

To-day it seemed as though the farmstead of the Loykas had regained its old appearance. For a good year or more the neighbours had disaccustomed themselves to come to the farm as they used to come

in times gone by. To-day, just as though the word had been passed round, they were all here, in order to be witnesses of Loyka's banishment from the farm house. Did they come to soothe or to pity him ?

And by something more than accident the musicians had also gathered here in order to celebrate the memory of the day. But you may be sure that they did not place themselves on the side of the noisy, laughing youth, but beside the two silent old folk and endeavoured to open their hearts by strains of melody and cheerful songs. They posted themselves beside that time worn furniture, beside which sat the time worn Loyka and his time worn wife. Here they played and sang, as if conscious that they did so for the last time, as if to-day they would fain pay off a debt long due, and would show their gratitude once more.

And thus the personality of old Loyka was, as it were, completed. On one side stood Vena, in whom, as it were, were embodied his bitter moods. On the other side stood the musicians in whom, as it were, were embodied all the gentleness and gaiety of his mind. Each formed, as it were, a single wing, and on these wings Loyka felt himself for the moment resigned to rest.

"It comforts me, lads, to think that you do not quite forget old Loyka, it does indeed comfort me," said Loyka to express to them his gratitude. "Truly,

it does indeed comfort me. Only that now I have no place for you as formerly, and my heart is but poor accommodation. But come, lads, let us be merry, let us celebrate this one little day that it may never drop out of our recollection." And old Loyka showed his old self once more. All his old hospitality emerged in him in its full vigour and in full self-consciousness, and thus his old friends could still recognise face to face the image of his former self, pure and uncorrupted.

And when people standing by the gate and in the court saw him thus, their old courage came back to them, the young lads insinuated themselves thither where the music sounded, where the cheery songs were hummed and chanted, and thus old Loyka for this one day had still the consolation of seeing that every one was on his side, and that the young folk had not a single living soul except the servants to take their part.

This aspect of affairs pleased him ; just as if the blood of his young days circulated through his veins, just as if it all depended on him how long the merriment should last, just as if he was not the least aware that Joseph by a single nod could make an end of all.

But we must add that Joseph did not by any such nod make an end of all. He pretended to see nothing of it at all, and was for all the world like a gamester who, having won, also throws a few kreutzers under the table for luck's sake.

Moreover, with all his faults, Joseph was not so foolish as not to perceive that he would give general offence if he was to-day to thwart old Loyka. On the contrary, it was his cue to make the whole village believe that after all the new vejmkar (pensioner) was really not so badly off, and that evil was the tongue which asserted anything else. It was his cue to let the whole village see what peace and comfort were reserved even for a drivelling father, to let them see how true was the announcement of that father's dotage which had been made publicly and privately, and to make them feel how much he had suffered from it.

And so, then, to-day on the farm were two sorts of gaiety : one like the fire flickering in the embers, and that was the gaiety of the old folk ; the other like a fire just emerging from the faggots, and that was the gaiety of the young folk, and the one sort of gaiety—the gaiety of the old folks was extinguished that very day. When evening spread itself above the patriarchal acres and above the farmstead, and the musicians were departed thence and the old folk crept into their isolated hall, to their pension house, it seemed to them as though around them and within their heart yawned a mighty void which could not be filled by any sounds of earth. No expansiveness of heart was possible, and every hearty expression died away upon their lips. And when they glanced fearfully around, it seemed to them as

though the spirit of the aged grandfather entered into them, and said "I am freed at last from these torture chambers, ye have entered into them."

The other gaiety, the gaiety of the young folk, lasted long into the night, and when they stepped into the hall of their farm house they seemed to hear even the walls re-echoing with mirth and jollity, and they had but to lightly hint their will and all was full of merriment. And they did hint their will : and it was as though the tutelary deity of the place threw wide the doors, and said "Ye enter here omnipotent ; so, then, tarry not, but enter."





CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Frank learnt that his parents dwelt in the pension house, he began to yearn for home. To his shame, be it said, not for the sake of his parents to whom he had already become disaccustomed owing to his fondness for his grandfather, but for his own sake, because he longed to see once more a spot where he had fashioned for himself in company with his grandfather so special a mode of existence that he fancied on the whole estate there was nothing to be compared with it.

As we know, Frank at present tramped the world, and, indeed, in the true sense of tramping. But it is much stranger that his parents should have permitted him to tramp abroad, aye, that later they wholly ceased to search for him in order to forbid it. From the beginning old Loyka had learnt that he walked about with the kalounkar, the fiddler, or the sieve-maker—let him walk with them, thought Loyka to himself, to be sure, even at home he was constantly with them when he was not with his grandfather and it did him no harm. He was rather pleased to think that the kalounkar, the musicians,

and the others still preserved a kind of predilection for the farm, paying back to the son the hospitality they had enjoyed from the father. Then again he heard about his son that he was with a certain gamekeeper, and that he was happy in the woods and ravines, and when the gamekeeper sent word that Frank behaved well with him, Frank was suffered to remain. Then a forester saw Frank at the gamekeeper's house, and hearing that he was a son from Loyka's estate, said : " So you must come and stay with me as well," and then Frank advanced just like a vagabond, having been a vagabond at the gamekeeper's, in course of time he became a vagabond at the forester's.

And here in these woods it seemed as though he had found once more all that he missed at home. When he found himself in some rocky haunt overshadowed by pine trees, all the fairy stories stood before him, just as if he were seated at home in one of those chambers by the coach house, until he even felt himself involved in horror, until even a panic seized him in that chilly dusk of the woodland, just as at home when at even they narrated about white women, about black hounds, and about accursed personages.

When a panic seized him, he laid foot to shoulder, sped out of the wood across the fields and to the cemetery, shouted to Staza, and then led her away that she might hear with him what he had heard

before alone. On the way he had already prepared her for what she was to expect, that, as he said, she might not be too much startled. And on the way through the fields they visited various hedgerows and their trysting places, and here they had already lost half their fear and on their way through the wood there was no need to penetrate to its rocky haunts, not at all, they took the path by the outskirts of the wood, or perhaps amused themselves at the keeper's house, and so lost the other half of their fears.

And this expedition into the wood was for Staza something unutterably charming and wonderful. From Bartos, the gravedigger, she heard how robbers fell upon him in the woods and how he defended himself. From Frank she heard how a panic seized a man when he retired to its rocky wildernesses. And when she came thither with Frank, she saw trees like giants, she heard the murmur as of a mighty river, she felt the breath of flowers, she felt the chill of the woodland, her little soul opened and something of the great unknown entered into it. It was not so smiling nor so clear as the white light of day which she saw from the cemetery, but it was just as majestic and inaccessible, so that she sat beside Frank silent and, as it were, full of reverent awe.

Neither the one nor the other knew how to express it all, but they knew so much as this—that in their

inmost soul was a sort of language which explained it all. Once Staza said that they would sing; and they began to sing

“odpocinte vpokoji verne dusicky.”

(Rest in peace ye faithful spirits), but scarcely had they pronounced the words before Staza burst into tears, and when she was quieted it seemed to her as though she heard organ tones above her; then she said that never in her life, not for the whole world would she dare to sing in this place again. And it seemed to the two as though she had expressed herself as follows: In the fields there is a presence which inviteth to the dance and singing, but here in the woodland there is a presence which inviteth to silence and attentiveness, because it would fain tell its own story.

That no doubt was the difference for Staza expressed in the most general terms. But otherwise she here entered into a new world, and still it appeared to her as though it was a world akin to the one she knew before. True, when she and Frank came out of the graves or from the graves themselves into the fields, gaiety, potent even to excess and delight seized upon her spirits, her soul soared aloft with the very skylarks, and fluttered into the blue of heaven and the clear transparent ether. But when she came hither into the wood she partially felt as though she were in the cemetery among the tombs and at home. Just as though she was actually

seated in a spot which might be called a cemetery, a grave. But with all its closeness, it was so magnificent and so beautiful, with all its dusky twilight it was so open and so free that her soul, although it had them not, yet felt on itself a kind of pinions, so that it fluttered and was carried aloft and even took Frank's spirit with it, so that both fluttered together.

Again it was otherwise, when they ceased to listen to the murmur of the woodlands, when they ceased to look at all that grandeur, when before their soul the ha-haing of that organ was mute, and trivial things emerged—things easily comprehensible. Here was the call note of the cuckoo, here a butterfly, a beetle, a fly. Here Staza again found speech, here words came to her ; at sight of these trivial things she again found herself, and here she would in a little time have again given way to dancing and singing.

So then this world was to Staza strange, new, and yet extremely welcome. Although Frank used to go for her, and so ought to have been her guide, she took upon herself the *rôle* of cicerone and played her part famously. She led Frank from tree to tree, and every tree was like the resting place of some pretty conceit. What she and Frank failed to find when roving through the fields, seemed to find a voice among these gnarled trees, as though it called aloud "Then it is just so."

Each of our two vagabonds went into the wood with a different object, and only when the mind of the one went halves with the other in all that they found in the wood, could the mental picture of the woodland within them be said to be complete. Frank heard every bird, saw every bird, heard every murmur, saw the squirrel and the hare, heard the foot of the wild goat crunching the gravel, and confided to Staza all he perceived. He was like the visible ear of the wood, and in his head the wood was, as it were, depicted down to the very song of the birds and the sound of the wind among the boughs. His eye was constantly in the crowns of the trees, constantly on the watch, constantly following something. All this time Staza was continually exclaiming "Look at that primrose! Look what a beautiful sweet briar! Here I still smell close at hand the last violet of the spring! Look what a grey coat of lichen that pine tree wears, and how silvery white is yonder birch! And see here are wild strawberries. Here the whortleberry is in bloom. This place we must remember. And here is a plant which I have planted on maminka's tomb; it is the tearlets of the Virgin Mary (the wild red pink). Look how the wild nut trees are covered with catkins," and similar things she said.

It is evident that Staza's mind was attracted to colour, to flowers, to variety. And if the birds skipped and hopped in Frank's mind, in Staza's blossomed a

whole parterre, the loveliest colours mingled together, rivulets streamed off from blue forget-me-nots, and fringed themselves with blackberries.

And if the soul of Frank was full of sweet sounds, the soul of Staza was garlanded with flowers. And when they paced the woodland, one gave to the other ; Staza gave to Frank flowers and colours, and Frank gave to Staza singing and melodious sounds.

But they also penetrated the rocky wildernesses and ravines of the woodland, and lingered there awhile. Only that Staza especially thought that it would be too much to sit there every day, that it would oppress her too heavily. Because in that ravine there was not any sound to be heard, everything was, as it were, embedded in silence, and if a step rustled it startled you. The rocky walls stood narrowly opposed to one another : if they had had hands they could have stretched them out and shaken them. And these rocky walls rose high into the air : high aloft the merest vestige of blue sky bent above them in a tiny narrow strip ; all the rest of the sky was banished from the view. Moreover sometimes a large bird appeared high above it all with a strange whistling note which startled you as much as when a footstep rustled.

What was it at home in the cemetery, compared with this huge grave ! If she had ever felt oppressed in a grave (but she never did feel oppressed) she had

only to sit upright or stand and she saw in a moment all the surrounding world : all the other graves, the ruddy-painted cross with the white iron figure of the Christus, the whole sky, and her cheerfulness was at once restored. But here ! if you felt oppressed, standing upright was of slight service to you. You must go quite away, and yourself cause a kind of rustling with your own footsteps, a kind of crunching of the gravel, which here was the source of so much trepidation.

And then a little pebble sometimes rolled over the rocky wall, and you could hear above measure distinctly its every tap again the rocky angles of the stone. Or sometimes a lizard, sunning itself, let fall a morsel of earth, and this, crumbling and rolling down, rustled in a quite mysterious manner. Sometimes a puff of wind carried a leaflet hither from the beech trees which grew yonder above the ravine, and this leaflet quivered and fluttered in the air as if it trembled and dreaded to take the final plunge. Here every feeble whisper became a voice.

Sometimes when they were seated here they had not the least wish to utter a word. A word here was re-echoed from the walls of the ravine, the walls themselves spoke their own language, and it was in a manner cheery enough—but you could not bear it long. Here they generally uttered their thoughts to one another only in whispers, seated side by side in order that they might not infuriate those walls. But

more than once it happened that even those walls themselves began to whisper. For the pellet of earth falling over them and fraying to pieces was also a whispering, and the leaflet falling from above and trembling was also a whispering, and such unexpected whisperings made the children pause abashed, and so many a time they broke off in the middle of their conversation only listening, looking at one another, and holding one another by the hand.

They ofttest trusted themselves to converse aloud when the woodland above them yonder also carried on its own conversation, when the wind unloosed its mouth, and when those organ pipes which Staza had first heard in the woodland had their bellows full distended. Then a word was easily spoken, even the walls no longer seemed to spy upon them, having too much to occupy them in the hurly-burly of the woods above them, even the pebble ceased to whisper, nor could you hear the rustling of the lizard or the dropping of the morsels of soil. Then only articulate sounds uttered outloud could withstand the din, and thus also Frank and Staza conversed aloud.

Here and there the brambles trailed over the rocky walls in every kind of amicable embrace. In places the mullen's tall stem shot upwards as if with some definite aim. "I have got so far at all events," it seemed to say. At one of the corners of the rocky

wall clung a single unlucky briar bush—clung in such a way that it could neither ascend or descend, but hung clinging in mid-air above a perpetual abyss. More fortunately fared a single birch above it which grew symmetrically upwards, and striking its roots into several crevices of the rocky wall maintained itself on its giddy platform.

But one sound was here which never languished and continually sated the ear with its gentle music. From one end of the rocky glen bubbled to the surface a spring of water pure as silver and our ravine offered to it its own lowest parts, in which the spring might arrange its water courses, and here it arranged them most tranquilly, like a good housewife. Where it suited best, it had fishes eyes (a plant), where you least of all expected it, it had strawberries stowed away, and where only that was possible it had some bush, in order that it might be a mirror to the bush.

And this streamlet greatly tranquillised the savage wildness of the ravine. This streamlet seemed to make a charming chamber of that rock-bound tomb, a chamber which especially entertained and welcomed Staza. And so when Frank said "Let us go to the ravine," Staza at first remembered only its blank walls of rock with their scanty blackberry bushes, the wild sweet briar, and the long lank birch tree, and then she felt as though she must try very hard to be brave enough to go. But soon after this she

remembered the water sporting with itself and babbling in its channel far below, and how here it lingered by a stone, here frolicked with a bush, and here streamed off from a whole colony of forget-me-nots—and then she needed not to be invited a second time, and after this Frank heard at once the words, “Well, then, let us go to the ravine.”

And this ravine was like another church to these children. As we know, they had their own little chapels first in the fields, by the hedgerows, not far from the nest of the quail. Here in this ravine they had a new church, substantially different from yon other, and yet in many respects not at all dissimilar. The difference was perhaps this—that yonder by the hedgerows and in the fields the mind expanded and soared aloft, but here gathered itself into its own depths. The similarity then lay in this that both there and here the soul gained strength and courage and other qualities of the like nature.

So now the life of these two young souls began to bestir itself. It began in the grave, it leapt forth among the fields, and here in the woodland it paused and listened. There where life ends their life began, there where life unfolds in germinating ears of corn beneath warm summer rays of light, their life carolled gaily, and here in the ravine and woodland where life has a couch of quiet dreams, their pilgrimage was reminded that it must return again to the graves.

Once Staza said to Frank "Now that you lead me into the fields and woodlands, I sing but seldom among the graves at home. Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"Because I am thinking how I may be with thee. Often and often I have begun to sing, but then it has occurred to me that I would far sooner be with thee, and that it would be better than singing. Once I wished to sing at maminka's grave, and just then I heard thy call at the wicket gate, and I went just as though thou had'st been maminka." Then said Frank "and do you know why I so continually run from place to place?"

"I do not know."

"I am seeking at all times where thou would'st like to be, and when I have found a place I show it thee, and then I cease to rove abroad. But I know that thou would'st not be happy at our house, and therefore I do not lead thee thither."

"And where hitherto hast thou been happiest," enquired Staza.

"With you in the cemetery."

"Then I shall be happy there also," said Staza.

"And also I like to be at our house, but in the pension house where grandfather lived," said Frank.

"And so my parents stay there now."

"I should like to be there also," said Staza, "only that thy brother ought not to live there."

“My brother is there no longer,” said Frank, “he is at the farm house, and my parents are at the pension house; they are there just as my grandfather used to be, and I should like to see the place again.”

It was true that Frank began to yearn for home, never more to quit it, for he thought that nothing could compare with the delight of dwelling where his grandfather had once been, that is to say, in the pension house or at the cemetery.

And so they went home, and the sun had already set when they came to Frishetts. When they set foot upon the village green a large number of people stood there and all were talking and pointing in the direction of the Loykas' house. Here Frank involuntarily called to mind the people who came to the farmstead on the day when the funeral bell was tolled for his grandfather, and they were almost all the same people, and Vena was among them.

Frank and Staza halted, concealed themselves behind the trunk of a large linden and listened. Something said the mayor, something said the sexton Vanek, something said Vena, and the rest of the people filled up the gaps with questions.

“They have driven him out, they have worried him out of the pension house,” said Vena. “Truly they did well: was he not old? Had he not given everything to the young folks? Had he not stinted himself for them? Had he not passed sleepless

nights for them ? and for them toiled at his estate—and this is his reward !”

“ And how could they drive him out of the pension house,” enquired a neighbour.

“ How could they drive him out ? Thus, look you, they could drive him out. They said to him “ leave the pension house,” and it was so. When do you peasant proprietors say anything else to your vejmkinkar (pensioner) ” sneered Vena.

And now the mayor began to elucidate matters. Sundry relations came to the young Loykas’, to spend the day, then for two days, but after that they did not wish to leave the farm at all. And in order that the young folk need not have them constantly on their hands, Joseph Loyka’s young wife went herself to the old folk and asked them whether they would object to being removed into the two chambers by the coach-house, and allow her relations to occupy the pension house. On this old Loyka asked if she had anything more at heart ? and whether she knew what it was to be banished to those two chambers—and by what sort of people they had previously been occupied. On this Barushka said that she did know, and that since the musicians whom he was so fond of had previously dwelt there well enough, perhaps he also would do there well enough, and that if he felt lonely and out of spirits he might invite the musicians to share the rooms with him. On this old Loyka went to his son and asked him whether he knew

what the young mistress of the house had just been saying. "I do know," replied his son, and repeated to his father everything which the father had heard from Barushka, because the young people had agreed between themselves what Barushka should say to the old man.

"Well, and what dost thou think of it all, my son," enquired old Loyka.

"I think the rooms would suit you admirably," said the young hospodar. "You see, of course, that I could not put my wife's relations there."

"And so I am to dwell there with Vena," laughed old Loyka.

"As you please. But for my part I think that it would be an excellent opportunity of ridding the house of Vena altogether."

Just as the neighbours had reached this point, they heard a banging of doors at the Loyka's house, and from the gate ran old Loyka with dishevelled hair. The moon shone over the village green with its first rays, Loyka ran direct to the neighbours there assembled.

"Neighbours, for the love of heaven, I implore you, lend me a match," he shouted. "In all the house I cannot find one little match wherewith to kindle the roof above the head of this son of mine!" shouted old Loyka, and kept constantly feeling in his pockets to see if there was anything like a match in them.

It was quite an awful spectacle to look upon the poor old man, and yet more awful to listen to him.

None of the neighbours answered him.

“What, then, will none of you lend me one little match?” shouted Loyka. “Oh ! fie ! the shame of it. I lent to each one of you whoever came to me at any time ; without usury I lent to all. Who of you can say I ever refused to lend him what he wanted. If any one needed stock I lent him live stock. If any one needed a team I lent him a team, if any wanted harvesters I lent him harvesters, and now I want a match from you and ye will not lend it me. And on this he cursed all his previous neighbourliness.

It was evident to everyone without further demonstration that old Loyka’s mind was unstrung. Some in their compassion took one another by the hand, some began to show their pity by shedding tears. The mayor stepped up to him, and said “Pantata, perhaps, if you were to lie down you would get over it in sleep.”

But old Loyka replied instantly. “I thank you for your good counsel, excellent man. Do you think that I could lay me down in the chambers by the coach-house ? I might. Why should I not ? When the musicians and the tinkers and the kalounkar lay there, why should not I lie there also ? But I know why I cannot lie there—because it would break my heart,” and at these words he struck his old breast

with his fists as though he would break it in pieces.

Again the mayor seized his opportunity, and said "You need not sleep there, pantata, give me your hand; I will lead you to our house, and you can choose for yourself the bed which you like best."

"True, that might be," said Loyka as if he came to himself a little. But immediately after this he added with a bitter laugh, "But think you sleep would visit me, there, either? If Loyka passed a night in the village outside his own estate, could he also sleep! He could not sleep! I thank you respectfully kind neighbour. But hence I will not stir. If no one is willing to lend me a match, the devil is in it, if I do not tarry here until the Lord God sends a fiery brand from heaven upon the farmstead of my son!"

And he raised his hands to heaven, and cried "Oh! Lord God, a little of thy fiery brimstone and thy name shall be exalted for ever and ever." He cried aloud like one of the prophets of the Old Testament, until horror encompassed every one who listened to him.

Then again he spoke, turning his face to his neighbours. "The Lord God heareth not, and that because I equally inflicted wrong upon my own father—only that I never drove him to the dog kennel. Only when my own father has forgiven me

and prayed for me, will the Lord God send down brimstone," and he sobbed aloud.

Again said the mayor "Take it not so to heart, pantata, perhaps your son will grow wiser, and all will yet be well."

"Not take it to heart! Already it is late, dear neighbour, already it is quite pitch dark in those chambers, ay, it is dark there in broad daylight." And here it seemed again as though he once more came to himself a little.

And not long after this he said "I know what would do me good for this one day, and where I could sleep. If some one would lead me to the burial ground to the grave of my father. But where is there any to be found to lead me thither. There is not one."

"If you wish it, pantata, we will go at once," said Vena. "I will conduct you thither, I will stay with you there as long as you please."

"So be it, so be it," said Loyka, and laughed, and looked from one to another and in fact allowed himself to be conducted by Vena in the direction of the cemetery. Almost all that group of neighbours followed him at a few paces distance, and accompanied him to the outskirts of the village.

And Loyka went with Vena to the burial ground.

But close behind them, even to the burial ground itself, went two small souls in great sorrow and tribulation : they were Frank and Staza.



CHAPTER IX.

AGAIN the moon shone out, when they came to the cemetery, just as long ago when Frank and Staza first passed the night in his grandfather's grave. And because the cemetery stood on an eminence there at times stole over it a warm breeze in whose breath the white iron figure of the Christus rattled upon the ruddy cross, several of the lesser crosses clattered with their arms, and sometimes creaked on its hinges a rusty little door, behind which lay concealed the inscription above some dead man's bones.

This clattering of the arms of the crosses, the rattling of the Christus and the creaking of the rusty doorlets was the only unrest which the dead gave to view—how little was it all compared with that with which they had so tormented one another in life!

Besides this, however, a breeze also ran above the graves and stirred the tall grasses and here and there a flower; but this unrest was scarce strong enough to be perceived, ay, rather it resembled the faint breathing of a child or the mere echo of a sigh.

As we know from the beginning of our story that tinsel music in which the Christus indulged was not over attractive towards nightfall, and people took to flight before it as if an enemy were in full pursuit behind them. But of those who came hither this evening none paid any attention to it ; perhaps they did not even hear it, because in their inmost hearts resounded an unrest far more fierce, more discordant, harsh, so that they fled from it into this strange harbour of refuge.

And hereupon, old Loyka, as soon as they had set foot in the cemetery, embraced with one hand that ruddy wood of the cross, and raising the other on high and fixing his eyes upon the white iron figure of the Christus, began to lament his fate, to call aloud, to curse, to pray, and to prostrate himself at the same time. "Thou martyred head," he cried, "thou hast suffered much, but thou had'st not a son to cut out thy heart piece by piece—I suffer more. Thou had'st no home, but because thou never had'st a home, thou knowest not what it is to be forced to leave a home, a home which I proffered to every one who needed it, and now I have not even so much as I proffered once to others—I suffer more. Thou wert young and vigorous when thou didst suffer, but thou had'st not hair streaked with grey and wrinkles on thy face, thou hast not suffered when the feet long to faint and flag, and must tramp on—I suffer more ! But thou didst voluntarily undergo thy torments,

mine are the punishment of my sins—yonder in that grave sleeps the witness of my words and of my evil deeds—I suffer more ! And I but now entreated Thy Father about some fire that he would send it as he sent it upon Gomorrah, and he heard me not—what is there still left for me to suffer !”

After these words, pronounced with immeasurable anguish, a silence fell on everything in the cemetery as though it would accentuate Loyka's bitterness—the white iron figure of the Christus clanged upon the cross from time to time—perhaps it did not wish without reserve to adapt itself to this train of thoughts.

On this Vena said “ If you would have allowed yourself, pantata, to be nailed to a cross like the Lord Christ, look you there, you never need have been banished from your home, and for my part I believe that Joseph would have helped you up if you had requested him.”

Loyka having bewailed and lamented his fate, now felt relieved, at least those thick clouds broke and dispersed in which till now his thoughts had been enveloped. But it was only for a moment. And in that moment he sank down by the cross, embraced the foot of it, and perhaps he wept. But this did not last long. He looked up to the heavens, ran his eyes through the myriad stars, and seeing the moon in the full splendour of its rays, suddenly laughed aloud, laughed without words, and so continued to laugh.

Vena, gazing in the same direction as Loyka, said "Pantata, that tiresome little moon tickles me too under the nose with its rays ; for my part I can hold out no longer, but laugh I must." And he laughed too.

"Nay, 'tis not that lad," said Loyka. "But I am so glad that I have found a comrade. Look at him, he hath no home either, and never in all my life had I observed it until to-day. To-day a holy spirit has quite illumined me ; to-day I know it, just as if I had walked the sky with him. Look ! look ! every night he must hie up yonder through agues and nipping blights, and that pleases me. Only I should like to know whether he also had an estate, whether he gave it to some Joseph, and so now is pensioned off ! Look at him ! look at him It pleases me to think that we are two, I here on earth, and he yonder in the sky—and as it seems to me they are no better off yonder in the sky than we here on earth."

And he laughed on. Then he stood up, and looking towards the pilgrim moon, said "Stop and let us take note how fast he gets over the ground, to see if he is good on his feet. And here he looked up at the moon, just as though he were reckoning its footsteps, and laughed aloud. From this laughter went forth a greater horror than from the clanging Christus or from the clattering branches of those crosses which spread around.

As we know Frank and Staza followed Loyka at a distance hither to the cemetery. Even now in the cemetery they kept several paces apart, so that Loyka had no notion of their presence. When Frank first heard his father on the village green, he was half bewildered, and knew not what was happening, and understood nothing of it all. When he here heard him pray that strange prayer by the cross his flesh crept and he shivered, for so much he understood of it all as to perceive that his brother Joseph was the cause. But when he heard his father laugh so wildly, he could bear it no longer, but gave way to an uncontrollable flood of tears. He had never so wept since the death of his grandfather.

This time Staza was beside him and feeling ill at ease might also have given way to tears, because crying is infectious among children. But Staza had hitherto never associated with children, Frank was her single companion, and so what would have equally constrained another child in her place to cry, had on her a different effect. She saw and heard weeping in plenty at the cemetery, but at the same time she saw and heard how the rest of the people mingled singing with the weeping. And thus this sequence of ideas formed itself in her little soul. Old Loyka beside the cross appeared to her like the corpse, which Vena had brought to its burial. Frank appeared to her like those who wept over the corpse

—consequently she must be one of those who sang above it. And, indeed, no sooner had Frank began to cry, than she began to sing

odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky
Kralovstvi nebeskeho dedicky.

(Rest in peace ye faithful spirits of the dead ; ye are inheritors of the heavenly kingdom). Both Staza's singing and Frank's weeping were one and the other, as it were, in tears. But in both was interwoven something which it is impossible to express in words. Anyone who had seen and heard it would have shuddered, and been cut to the heart. In the cemetery waved the warm night wind, in the heavens hung the moon, by the clattering cross stood a despairing father, and at a little distance by another trembling cross knelt Frank who wept aloud, and Staza who wept in singing the words of which exhorted all to peace.

Old Loyka, somewhat roused by this from his own sombre fancies, turned and listened. He seemed as though he were on the watch, as though he sought out for himself some new pathway, and now was deliberating whether he should take it.

“Dost hear, Vena ? Dost hear ?” said he to Vena. “I once heard that melody in the hall of our house ; but there were harps with it.”

The reader will recollect that it was during the dance after the funeral of Frank's grandfather, that

Frank and Staza suddenly sang the song from the hall to the sound of harps and violins.

“Dost hear, dost hear it,” he again repeated after a pause. “For my part I had no notion the song was so merry a one when there were harps with it. And it would seem that to night there are no harps with it.”

There were no harps with it, to be sure, but all the same it was accompanied by the audible weeping of his own son.

“And it pleases me to find that they know it here in the cemetery. Prythee, lead me to those musicians, and let them play on. And if they do not wish to play, tell them that you are from Loyka’s farm, and then of course they will play, for they will remember Loyka although he rules his home no more.”

And he went with Vena several steps in the direction of the singing and crying, where Frank knelt sobbing and Staza knelt singing. When he came to them, Frank embraced his knees, and cried “Papa! Papa!” Staza was silent.

“Papa!” said Loyka. “I might have known that they would recognise me here. Where they are skilled in singing and playing, there they know old Loyka. So halloo! and play something lively that I may have a dance here.” And this poor old man here in the graveyard struck an attitude as though he would caper about, and as though he were ready for a fling.

And here Frank falling upon his knees continually embraced his father's feet, and sobbing piteously, exclaimed "Papa! Papa!"

"Why dost thou clog my feet like a moist clod of earth, when I wish to dance a measure," said Loyka to Frank, whom he did not recognise. "It is a disgusting habit, and looks as though thou had'st come to me for alms."

"Papa! Papa!" cried Frank.

"Ah! I know thee now. I recognise thee now. Thou art the ghost of my son Frank, and walkest here in the cemetery. But thou art not Frank. He tramps it with the musicians, whom they chivied from my house—and that pleases me."

"Papa, it is I," cried Frank.

"Thou art not he, because thou hast no harp with thee. Look you there is no harp here, so you will not persuade me. But if thou wert a worthy ghost thou would'st lead me to my Frank, I would gladly see him and those musicians with whom he tramps the world, and I would tramp it too."

"I will lead you home, Papa," cried Frank.

"Thou shalt not lead me thither; for me, I want no home. But I want to leave home far behind, like my son Frank. I want to tramp it with the musicians, that they may compose a song about it, and may point to me on the market places and say that I am he, I am that old Loyka who dares no more have music in his house, because his son has

banished it hence, and so I must follow the musicians even to the market place, because I have not where to entertain them at my house. Will you lead me to them ?”

“I will lead you to them,” said Frank at random, without knowing what he said or why he said it.

“That pleases me,” said Loyka, “and inasmuch as the way will be a long one, we must rest ourselves here yet a little space.”

And they seated themselves on the graves, as if by accident old Loyka and Frank on the grandfather’s grave, Staza on her mother’s grave ; Vena stood.

But at this point another character appeared on the scene, and when he had posted himself near them, said “Pray, who at this late hour, here disturbs my lodgers. I have guaranteed them rest, and will not have them molested.” He said it heartily, and with a certain humour. It was the gravedigger, Bartos.

“Good man,” said Loyka, “we seek a lodging for the night, and if you will let us be here, you can seat yourself beside us.”

Before Bartos had stepped up to the group he had heard who they were, he recognised Loyka and the children by their voices, and by listening a few moments had soon understood what brought them thither. He therefore wanted no explanation, and at once adapted himself to the situation.

"If that is all your trouble," said he in the same voice, "you can remain here as long as you please; but it will not please you very long, I fancy," and he seated himself beside them.

"So, so, so, so," muttered Loyka, as was his custom when some process in his ideas had to be emphasised.

"What thinkest thou, old friend, who has suffered most, I or Jesus of Nazareth."

"You, *pantata*, and that because none of us know what you have yet to suffer, although you have already suffered much."

At these words Loyka started, because it was just as though they had been chosen out of his own soul, and he had rather expected contradiction.

"But I do not want to suffer any more, lad, and, if you know, pray tell me what I am to do."

"I know one thing you might do," said Bartos. "If you were to lie down to rest in these chambers," and here he pointed to the graves, "all would be over, but you have no right to them yet, nor dare I enclose you in them. However I will tell you what you should do. You want nothing but to divert yourself a little."

"Exactly what I thought myself," said Loyka. "You speak like a true doctor, and if I should listen to you yet awhile, I know not whether good might not come of it."

“ And we will manage it thus. To-morrow I lead you into a neighbouring village to the house where Frank is living. There are the fiddlers and the harpers, and we can fling up our heels in a hornpipe.”

Even this idea was one which seemed to have been borrowed from Loyka's own mind, and Bartos did indeed borrow it from Loyka ; because, as we know, a moment before Loyka had expressed his desire to have a dance before this unseen witness.

“ The further I listen to thee, the more convinced I am that thou art a mighty sage,” said Loyka with evident satisfaction, and it was plain that the gravedigger had struck exactly the right chord.

“ But inasmuch as we shall have a debauch there, we must rest ourselves before we set out on our journey. We must sleep, for we have not slept at all for several nights,” continued the gravedigger.

“ Thou mightest stand and preach in the pulpit, good man,” said Loyka, highly delighted at what the gravedigger had said. By his vague discourse the gravedigger had in reality probed Loyka to the quick. And Loyka hearing that repeated from another's mouth which a moment before he had been the only one to long for, and thus having the object of his own wishes freshly paraded before his mind, felt relieved. His words and expression were deprived of that sickeningly painful cast which a short time before had driven Frank to weeping and Staza to song.

The two children now nestled close together, and looked on like birdies from a nest at what was passing before them. They did not understand, but it had not any longer so much horror for them.

“If thou thinkest that we ought to sleep,” said Loyka, “as though he were still replying to the recommendation of the gravedigger, ‘it will be best to lay us down and sleep,’ and hereupon he immediately made as though he would lie down.

“When you were married, pantata, I was at your wedding,” said the gravedigger. “And when the deceased, your father, quitted you for the pension house, he said ‘If at any time you are too much harassed to sleep at home, come to me, you will sleep beside your father.’ And to-day, you have come to him, pantata, and will sleep soundly.”

His father had in reality said this on that long passed wedding day, and now the son came for the first time to sleep beside him. A son already grey-headed, to sleep beside a father who was no more among the living.

“Only go on, go on, and tell me about it,” entreated old Loyka, and fitful dreams were already weighing down his eyelids. Yet a few words he pronounced as if in assent, for Bartos began to narrate to him the story of his own young days, and how he had performed such and such feats, but after a while the gravedigger observed that he was speaking to Loyka who already had fallen asleep.

Vena remained beside the sleeping Loyka. Bartos took Frank with him into his house, and told him to speed early next morning to the village about which he had spoken correctly enough, then he himself, like a night watcher, went out from time to time into the cemetery to see how Loyka fared.

The next day they followed Frank to the abode of the musicians. We must here say without concealment that Bartos had devised a kind of popular remedy for Loyka's sick spirit. Whether it was destined to succeed or not we cannot however state at present.

In the village they found Frank already arrived. There also they found the musicians whose loss Loyka had so much deplored. The whole party collected at the alehouse, and the musicians played and sang, Bartos taking special care that everything should be gay and lively. A rumour of what had occurred at the farmstead had already outrun them, and consequently everyone knew it was the afflicted Loyka who in this manner compensated himself for the loss of his home.

It was a piteous spectacle to look on the old man, and to see how his mind, restless enough without this soothing medicine, gloated over the well-known strains of the harps and violins. He sat and listened. The expression of his face was serious as if he were lost in thought, and not a word escaped his lips. The whole time he did not move a muscle, his eyelids

never winked, his lips appeared as though they could not open. One would have thought that the music of his old friends would have stimulated him to mirth or tumultuous grief. But it was not so. Excitement seemed to hold the spiritual part of him in equipoise—and he was completely tranquil through it all.

Frank stood the whole time by the side of his father, who was seated. Old Loyka held him round the waist with one hand, and with the other stroked his face and head. And this he did the whole time without speaking or making any other movement. Only Bartos had straitly charged the musicians in no way to recall his thoughts to his home.

When it seemed to Loyka that they had played long enough, he rose and said to the musicians very gravely “I thank you, comrades, and as far as in me lies, I will requite you. But go not to our son’s farmstead, there I will never dwell again. I have determined to make a home just as the whim seizes me. Here I can invite you to me at any time. Here the people are good and honest, and no one says “No! act differently.” I have been too long at home, you know,—on the farm, ’tis seldom I have quitted it, and so this has come to me that I must quit it, I must look about me and go a little into the world to learn how the world wags elsewhere.”

And more he said to the same effect. On this he departed from the village with Frank, the musicians

following after him and playing through the village and even when the village was left behind. And then they went into other villages, and there much the same occurred. Only that Loyka marched into those other villages at the head of a band of musicians, so that the village was immediately in an uproar, topsy-turvy, and with its feet in the air. People ran out of their houses on to the village green, gathered round him in a group, and said to one another "It is Loyka from Frishetts: he is pensioned off, and so, see! he has gone mad."

Soon a rumour spread all through the country side about Loyka, how that he walked from village to village with an escort of musicians, and scarcely had they finished saying so, when lo! Loyka announced himself by well-known strains of music. And when the people ran together on the village green and collected round him, he paused, and said "Hearken to what I will preach unto you."

On this he delivered a kind of sermon, showing forth how he had passed the night in sufferings, how he wandered with the moon, how that the moon wandered in the sky and he wandered in the world, and how he arose with the first dawn, and how the foxes had holes and he had not where to lay his head like the Son of Man.

He even walked about the market places and spoke to people and implored them only not to send him home, and he would repay them for everything.

Doubtless some laughed, some who knew him well pitied him. And many only pretended to pity him.

Then again he also walked with the musicians, and when he came into some village and stood on the green, he enquired whether they had any vejmkar there that he might have a look at him ; or said he " Let the vejmkar be brought to me on the green, and we will come to an understanding about everything." And more to the same effect. Soon old Loyka belonged to the roving figures of the neighbourhood about whom people talk or do not talk, whom we half laugh at and do not laugh at, who add a peculiar feature to those districts much as the eagle adds a character to the woodland above which it wanders lonely, and above which it utters from time to time a cry which pierces to the bones.

And so Frank led his father to all the places with which he had previously become acquainted through his own vagabond's mode of life.

In some places, too, the respectable portion of the citizens came out to meet them, inviting old Loyka for friendship sake into their houses, for, in truth, Loyka had been the best known and most highly respected man of the neighbourhood. But Loyka never accepted such invitations, though modestly thanking his friends for all their kind intentions. " I never go on to any farmstead," he would say.

“ I thank you, neighbours, most respectfully. Leave me any place where there is no farmstead, and I have enough for my poor wants.”

If there was a cross anywhere on the village green, Loyka posted himself beside it, and when the people began to flock around him, he pointed to the Christus, and said “ Here ye behold him,” and then he pointed to himself, and said “ and here ye behold me.” “ He yonder bore his cross only once to Calvary, but I bear mine continually. But the hangman’s servants martyred him, me my own son martyred because I gave him my estate.”

At other times again he cried “ Wherefore do ye wonder that I go from village to village? Here ye behold a man crucified upon a cross! he also wandered about in the world and no one hindered him. Why do ye hinder me.”

Also Frank led his father away into the woodland, and once a fiddler whom they happened to meet at the outskirts of the wood accompanied them to the well-known ravines. Never in its life, perhaps, had that rocky glen entertained such a fantastic group as it did that day, and, perhaps, never in their lives did such tones reverberate from its rocky walls as did that day.

Even old Loyka felt as though he were seated in the chambers by the coach house at his home, and listened to the old, old, stories. Only that on this occasion it was Frank who narrated his youthful

experiences in that ravine, in which he pointed out where the wind-hover was wont to hang suspended in the air, where the brambles trailed, where hung the clinging sweet brier, and where the streamlet bubbled in which those blue flowers flourished. And the fiddler played ; and it was all so strange to those rocky walls that one after the other they repeated it all, as if they gloried in their ready memory, and as if they wondered what it was all about.

And then at last there fell upon the place, after the playing and the story-telling, a silence like the grave. When the birch tree, safely anchored by its roots above them, stirred, even old Loyka heard it, and looked to see what it was. When the lizard, sunning itself by the bushes in the warm sunlight, let fall over the rock a fragment of pebble or a crumb of earth, Loyka looked to see what had happened there above his head. And when in the centre of the ravine a leaflet was whirled along tremulous and fluttered like thought itself, Loyka glanced upward, and wondered " Whence art thou ? Where, I wonder, did they treat thee like myself ? "

And then it came to pass that his eyelids drooped wearily, and he fell asleep. When he awoke he would no more hear of going into the villages, he would no more hear of the musicians, and said he fain would come hither oftener. He could come here as often as he chose, because the woodman at whose house Frank had been staying for some time,

now welcomed Frank's father also as an old and well-known acquaintance. And Frank led him into this ravine every day, here every day he slept most comfortably, and when he awoke he seemed always as though he found a portion of himself which he had lost.


It almost seemed as though Bartos' device was destined to succeed, at all events, it partially succeeded. But it still failed of its full effect, because Loyka would not hear of returning to his home. But at the same time he would not hear of strolling through the villages any more.

People had already ceased to say in telling his story that he was wandering through the villages. Now they said that he wandered in the woods.





CHAPTER X.

LD Loyka continued to be a constant figure of the district surrounding Frishetts. If any one from the neighbourhood or from abroad had come there and enquired what novel or peculiar event had happened there, he would have learnt that they had there a vejminkar (pensioner) belonging to a large estate and with a large pension, but who would not dwell on his estate, and roved about even in the woods and dwelt in the cemetery with the gravedigger Bartos.

“You have here a strange and ludicrous thing,” he would hear said: for people frequently regard what is strange as also ludicrous. “Perhaps he would sooner allow himself to be nailed to a cross than to return to the farm in which his son is hospodar. Some years ago he was just a little touched in the head and walked with a band of musicians from village to village—what a peasant it is! Now he is a little more reasonable; only no one can persuade him to go home—the fool!”

“And has he been long thus,” the stranger would perhaps enquire.

“Already a good many years. His wife dwells in the farm house, and about her Loyka says ‘Let her stop there, she merits it.’ ’Tis a strange and ludicrous affair.” So would run the discourse of the native of the place.

And so we see that even over his sufferings several years have flown and, before we had expected it, we are several years older, and with us Loyka and Frank and Staza and all the rest.

During this time, it is true, Joseph importuned his father to return home. He despatched servants after him with the assurance that he never dreamed his father would make such a fuss about the two chambers by the coach house and take the matter so seriously, and that if only he would return he might dwell in the pension house unmolested. But the servants who were sent with these messages never succeeded much, because on these occasions old Loyka behaved as though they wished to hale him to the butcher’s, stuffed his fingers in his ears, and took to flight. Moreover, at times, he sent strange messages to his son, though it is hard to say whether the servants delivered them just as he gave them.

But old Loyka took so violent an aversion, even to the servants from the farm, that if he came to a village, his first question was whether any one from Frishett’s was on the watch for him. And if he tarried several days in a village he posted guards

here and there, that he might timely take to flight if the servants ventured to approach.

And it happened on one occasion that the servants from the farm entered several villages close upon his heels, because the young hospodar had charged them with a message in which he declared that he would no longer be held up to the eyes of the world as a villain, and have his name bandied about from mouth to mouth as that of a God-forsaken reprobate.

Here old Loyka fumed furiously. "Only let him come himself and I'll show him how I hold him up to the world as a villain," said he, and from that time forth he avoided the villages and dwelt most willingly with Bartos at the cemetery.

I know not how it came about, whether Joseph took the message to mean that he was to come personally to his father, but so it was that he came to the cemetery, and all the servants with him who had ever been despatched after his father with any message. No sooner did old Loyka become aware of their approach than he was almost beside himself, and locked himself into the charnel house among the shin bones and skulls, only that he might see no one and need not have to speak to any one.

Then Joseph called in a loud voice in the cemetery to his father, bidding him come forth and return home ; ay, he swore that he himself would not return home without him, that he would no longer endure to become the bye-word for a God-forsaken reprobate

among the populace, and that if his father refused he should be dragged home forcibly.

"And how do you mean to accomplish it," enquired Bartos, who had appeared during this scene on the threshold of his dwelling.

"I shall have the doors forced," responded Joseph.

"How so?" enquired Bartos, calmly.

"Oh, you know all about it," said Joseph to Bartos, "It is you who are the cause of all this, and I will suffer it no longer. It is you who purposely retain my father in your house to make capital out of him. It is you who are purposely coupling my brother with that young vagabond——"

Further Joseph did not proceed in his harangue.

"What is it you called Staza?" Bartos asked Joseph, and at the same time uttered a yell so menacing that the servants who were with Joseph, recoiled several paces. But scarcely had Bartos pronounced the words before he had already gripped Joseph under the armpits, swung him into the air, and balancing him like a racquet ball, continued, "I'll pound every one to a jelly who dares once to say such a thing."

And from the way in which Joseph turned deadly pale in Bartos's hands and impotently shook and shivered, it was evident that he believed the gravedigger to be in earnest, and about to fulfil his threats to a tittle.

But Joseph, in his own impotence, began to pluck up a bolder spirit when he contemplated his servants, and no sooner had Bartos once more dropped him on to the ground than he shouted to them to force the doors of the charnel house without further hesitation and to drag out the aged Loyka.

“And, prythee, why not? Prythee, why not?” observed Bartos, in a voice again perfectly calm, as if a moment before he had not threatened to make a jelly of a human body. And he posted himself before the doors of the charnel house.

“Cleave the doors asunder!” commanded Joseph, seeing that his servants did not wish to have anything to do with the business. “A souterkin of beer to the man who cleaves them open.”

And when the servants made a rush in right earnest to get at the doors, Bartos, as though he had heard nothing of what Joseph had said, merely stretched out his two hands and said, “Cave!” and already two of the servants lay on the ground blubbering, as though they had come to order their own graves to be delved. The rest of the servants wavered in their charge, and then suddenly turned and fled at full speed by the shortest road out of the cemetery.

Joseph began to jeer and threaten them.

“Everything is not to be had for a souterkin of beer,” said Bartos, and laughed or rather smiled tauntingly.

“ But it will be had all the cheaper,” said Joseph, “ when I bring half the village again you, you will pipe in another strain.”

“ Do not bring them,” said Bartos, and continued to smile tauntingly.

“ When I report matters at the bureaux——”

“ Report it not, report nothing, unless you would report your own precious doings,” said Bartos.

“ But, of course, if you think it right, bring them, report it all, only, you just sleep upon it and I will sleep upon it too.”

“ But I tell you it is notorious how you encourage his vagabondage, how you cause disunion in the family——”

“ Ay, ay, peasant, you have it well off by heart ; but let me tell you, that if half your village comes with all its bureaux, they will retire hence just as your own servants retired a moment since. And so it is *I* who cause disunion in families. Behold yonder doors before the charnel house, and think whom they conceal. So it is *I* who cause disunion between him and thee. I, forsooth, was that notable son who lowered his father beneath the meanest of his servants, who shortly after commanded him to dwell in a stable, who baited him until he had baited him out of house and home, who deprived him of head and of reason, oh ! I pray you just bring hither your village and the whole squad of officials. I will enlighten them in your presence as to what a

notable peasant thou art, who, in place of a heart, hast planted in thy bosom the gross peasant's corruption and art a wicked son because thy father is a pensioner on thy bounty ! ”

Such and more to the like effect said Bartos, and hereupon pressed Joseph, with his body, out of the cemetery. There was little need to use pressure, Bartos was only making sport of him, but it was all the worse for Joseph, because he felt what a ridiculous figure he cut before the servants, and before Bartos, and his humiliation appeared to be intolerable. But there was no escape from it. He must e'en quit the cemetery with his message undelivered and must see to it that he did not fairly take to flight, which would have been more ridiculous than this measured retreat, during which, Bartos, at least, allowed him so much apparent liberty, that he appeared to be retiring of his own free will, and so Joseph had nothing for it but to recoil with threats.

And being now in a towering passion he resolved to fulfil these threats. When he had returned to Frishetts he collected his neighbours and others, and summoned them to go with him for his father, whom Bartos was detaining in the charnel house, and whom he refused to let out.

Certainly this announcement wore little the appearance of truthfulness, because they knew Bartos too well to believe him capable of doing anything of the kind. Nevertheless Joseph contrived to persuade

them to go with him, partly out of curiosity, to see what would happen, partly because they thought that the father and son might yet be reconciled, now that the son made such a point of it ; and an affair of such importance was worth the trouble of a man's being a witness to it.

And so they trailed out of Frishetts, and Joseph at their head, towards the cemetery, so that they had the appearance of a procession of people carrying some one to the grave, whereas they went for a man in order to bring him from the grave and back to his own home.

When they reached the cemetery the neighbours remained in the rear, Joseph advanced to the dwelling of the gravedigger, and shouted "Bartos, now we are here, so let out my father."

Bartos issued from his house, which had also a door into the fields, halted in front of the threshold, and seeing in reality half the village at Joseph's back, enquired jestingly "Are you come to pay me a visit, neighbours ? I am delighted, I am delighted, but you must only come one by one, because men do not enter these precincts all at once."

"We are come for my father," said Joseph. "I'll teach thee, thou son of a spade, that I know how to keep my word."

"For your father ? You have him there," said Bartos, and pointed vaguely all over the cemetery.

“Open the charnel house, gravedigger,” said Joseph imperiously.

“It will not be necessary,” answered the gravedigger. “Yonder is thy father,” and he pointed to the great ruddy cross by which stood old Loyka with dishevelled hair, holding in his hand a human shin bone which he had picked out for himself in the charnel house, and looking from one to the other of those who had approached the cemetery, as much as to say, “If any one comes near me I will break his head for him with this shin bone.”

All started back who saw it, even Joseph started. That grey-haired sire among the tombs, holding his left hand around the great cross on which hung the old white iron figure of the Christus, and in his right hand a human bone, seemed standing there the defender of the dead against whom the living had come in battle array.

“What went ye out for to see,” began old Loyka in the words of Scripture. “A notable son who promised in presence of you all to bear me on his arms, and then waved me to those chambers which I had reserved for beggars, and bade me dwell there. Behold him, yonder, he is among you. Or came ye out for to see a father bereft of sense and reason who long ago invited you to the feast, danced with you and made you merry. Behold me here, I stand beneath the crucified Jesus, but I have no more to spend on feasts, nothing remains to me save this

bone, and none of you have much appetite for that. Surely, you do not believe that old Loyka has ceased to be hospitable? Oh, I could feast you freely, but you would spurn my dainties, saving such of you as are like me, pensioned off on a son's bounty, and his son and his son's wife have meted out to him for his portion two chambers which were reserved for tinkers and pedlars—but you know it all."

Among the neighbours who had come thither was also the mayor, and he said "Pantata, you would not have to dwell in those chambers. Joseph promises you that he will not meddle with you in the pension house."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Loyka, "and so you believe him, do you? This man who went against me like an enemy until he had stripped me of everything! Of my rights of hospodarship, of my respect with the servants, of the love of my children, and of this last span of earth on which I had laid my head. If he were to stretch out his hand to this cross, and lay it here in the side of the martyred Jesus, I would say to him "thou liest."

On this no one spoke more. The neighbours saw that it would be in vain, and Joseph perhaps said nothing, because he saw that every further step he took only the more incensed his father. Only here and there among themselves the neighbours exchanged a few desultory remarks.

And after awhile Loyka began to speak again almost meekly, as though he were fit to cry. "What injury have I done you, my neighbours, that ye have leagued yourselves against me with yonder fellow. I always avoid you all, I do not get in any one's way, I do not beg anything at your hands, I creep away like the field mouse beneath the hedgerow, for many years ye have not heard my voice, I suffer and am mute ; what do ye find so sickening in me that you come to the cemetery against me as against a savage beast."

This speech excited the neighbours compassion, they felt that they ought not to have yielded so easily to Joseph's summons, and that old Loyka deserved more consideration at their hands than that they should have allowed themselves to bustle off as to a spectacle : just as when we wish to see something which is not to be seen every day. Even Joseph felt too well that he had invited them to play an ungracious part, and therefore used his best endeavours to turn their attention from his father and himself, and to concentrate it upon the gravedigger : on whom he thought it high time to be revenged ; and he began to talk as though it was Bartos alone who hindered his father from returning home, and here he began to threaten his neighbours with the anger of the bureaux if they did not aid him in rescuing his father from the power of Bartos.

On this occasion Bartos rid himself of Joseph by a sarcasm, and this sarcasm was more properly a very serious blow. "I had not thought," he said to Joseph, "that you would offer yourself as village messenger to the bureaux so long as we had Vena for the purpose. But it is all of a piece with the rest of your hospodarship. You bow the messenger out of your house, and turn messenger yourself—before I die I still expect to see you turn kalounkar (tape pedlar)".

Bartos, as we know, had never far to go for an answer, and generally had the laugh on his side. Thus it came to pass that everyone lost who measured his strength with him even before he was ready himself with a suitable retort. Having heard Bartos say his say, people did not wait to hear how his adversary would defend himself: they were convinced that every one who began a dispute with Bartos would be worsted either by fisticuffs or some smart repartee.

And so the neighbours gave way even here to quite audible laughter, looked at one another, turned right about face, took their way to Frishetts, and on the way smilingly observed that Joseph wanted to be a village messenger or a kalounkar (tape pedlar).

Joseph then was far from successful on this occasion, he not only became hateful to his neighbours for the want of respect which he had shown towards his father, but he became still more an

object of ridicule, and that was a thing he dreaded very much indeed.

But yet he did not despair.

And now as soon as ever his pair of heels had crossed his own doorstep, the children on the village green began to play at being messengers and kalounkari (tape pedlars); when people met each other their discourse was of messengers and kalounkari. He even heard it amongst his servants. Even when he stood up in chapel, all at once a bee seemed to buzz past his ear and he heard a whisper about the kalounkar (tape pedlar) and messenger. He heard it even when no one was saying anything about it, but that was seldom. When he went into the alehouse he imagined people there had just ceased to speak about kalounkari, and when he desired to return home he hesitated, because he felt sure that as soon as his back was turned they would begin to talk at once (though they had ceased in his presence) about the kalounkar.

Bartos' witticism flew from Frishetts all over the neighbourhood. Joseph heard it a-field from the labourers, he heard it on the highroad, from the road mender, who all of a sudden exclaimed with a sigh, "Ah! heavens, when will the kalounkar (tape pedlar) come this way again; I should like to buy of him a bit of ribbon, mine is quite worn out." And the road mender, at these words, laid down his hammer and ceased to break stones and looked at

Joseph. Perhaps, even in any case, he would have looked at him as he passed, but, at any other time, Joseph would have scarcely heeded him, under present circumstances the man's look galled him.

And thus he saw and heard mockery everywhere, wherever he showed himself. Moreover, his evil destiny contrived that a kalounkar should come about this time to Frishetts, who, not daring to put up at the Loyka's, spread out his wares on the village green. Hereupon, when most of the people had formed a circle round him came Vena and said, "How dare you venture with your tapes and ribbons on to our village green when we have our own kalounkar in the village?"

Those who stood in the circle greeted these words with boisterous merriment, indeed, with acclamations; the children ran about the green squeaking "kalendar," in shrill trebles, and the boldest of them, went before the Loyka's farm-house and yelled "the Kalounkar is here, we ourselves are playing at kalounkar," and every brat wanted to be a kalounkar.

This affair, apparently so trivial, reached such a head, that Joseph no longer cared to leave his house and, in fact, never left it. Vena, standing on the village green, cried to all newcomers who went past Loyka's farmstead, "None are allowed to enter there, and the peasant proprietor daren't venture out—just come here—here are nice ribbands for you."

This affair, apparently so trivial, infuriated Joseph to such a degree, that he never spoke with any one in the village. He felt that he could not speak with them. Loyka's farm became the butt of every saucy ribbald witling, even a kind of comic song circulated under the name of the "Kalounkarska," or "Lay of the Kalounkar," and when any of the musicians straggled into Frishetts and began to show off his skill on the village green, all the full-grown lads flocked round him and wanted him to play the "Kalounkarska." A little later every melody became the "Kalounkarska" if Joseph was within earshot. And they all began to play the "Kalounkarska," one after the other, although they had been singing quite different songs till then.

And so it came to pass that one day Joseph went to his wife and said, "Barushka, it is impossible for us to hold out any longer in Frishetts, I shall sell the farm and we will emigrate elsewhere." There was no sign of hesitation, he meant it in earnest, nor did Barushka by any means endeavour to divert him from his purpose. So then, let him find a purchaser and Joseph Loyka would decamp from Frishetts.

Not long after this the good folk of Frishetts whispered to one another that the kalounkar wanted to decamp. Vena one day delivered on the village green a complete disquisition: How, even this kalounkar, who showed the door to every real kalounkar, was now every day peeping out of that

very door, how he had already all his wares in his pack and how they would soon have to drum him out of the village to his own tune.

At that time, it so fell out, that Bartos, the grave-digger, came into Frishetts to pay a visit, and went direct to the house of the mayor.

"I have friends with us just now. Do you come to take their measure—eh?" said the mayor.

"Not exactly that," said Bartos, "but I could wish to take my spade in hand to clear a certain something out of the way."

"Well, seat yourself, seat yourself," said the mayor.

And Bartos began :—

"You are Frank's guardian, my dear mayor."

"I am, I am," admitted the mayor.

"And the money which Frank inherited through his grandfather you gave to me to stow away."

"I did, I did, you do not, perhaps, want me to take charge of it again. That would be a pretty business. What could I do with it, pray, at my time of life? And, pray, where could it be better stowed away than at your house."

"I do, indeed, wish you to take charge of it again. It is well stowed away at my house; but it is dead, like everything else that lies there; and this money must not lie dead."

"And how do you mean to bring it to life, my dear Bartos."

“ Well, thus. I have heard that Joseph desires to sell the farm.”

“ And you are the cause of that, my dear Bartos.”

“ I am, and I am not. Only tell me this. Does Joseph wish to sell ? ”

“ And did you wish to buy ? ”

“ Not I, but you, mayor, are to be the purchaser.”

“ Oh ! so I am to buy Loyka’s farm.”

“ You, as Frank’s guardian, with Frank’s money, and for Frank. If there is not sufficient, you can advance the money, or a debt might remain on the estate. Frank is young and can economize. Besides this, he has his younger son’s portion on the estate. That would accrue.”

The mayor began to reflect. “ Hum ! It would accrue : perhaps it might be done.”

“ If only he wishes to sell ? ”

“ That I could find out from him. I could, indeed, invite him to our house ; but now, no one can entice him out of his own at any price—of which you are the cause. I could go to him myself.”

“ No, no, mayor ! no, no ! He must send for you. We must so contrive, not that we should seem bent on buying the farm, but that Joseph should seem bent on selling it.”

“ Not in vain do they call you a ‘ sapient grave-digger,’ ” said the mayor, flatteringly.

But, frankly, my dear Bartos, I do not as yet see your drift.”

Bartos was glad that he had hit upon something which no one else had hit upon before, and that the mayor had said in so many words, that his (Bartos) more elaborate design eluded his penetration.

"It is as follows," explained Bartos. "Old Loyka will not return to his estate. Of that you are convinced?"

"Of that I am convinced," repeated the mayor."

"That is to say, so long as Joseph is on the farm," continued Bartos.

"So long as Joseph is there?" said the mayor, interrogatively, as though he again failed to grasp the scheme of the gravedigger.

"Then my idea is this. Might not old Loyka return to his farmstead if Joseph was there no more?"

"If he was not there? That pleases me. That might be."

"And if everything else there was re-arranged just as it was wont to be in times gone by—Loyka to command the servants; in the chambers by the coach-house mirth to reign as in the days of old; Loyka to dwell in the farmhouse and be hospodar, both in name and reality; Frank, voluntarily, to be subservient to his wishes, whereby, we should make a good hospodar of Frank. Do you not think that in this manner old Loyka might yet recover his health?"

This proposal pleased the mayor.

"If he did not recover, what help? We should have done what we could. At all events Frank

would gain a constant occupation and all pretexts would be removed from old Loyka for tormenting himself further."

"Gravedigger, the more I reflect about it, the more I like it. And for my part, I am almost convinced that Loyka will recover."

And the mayor rubbed his hands and said to Bartos, "You would be the cause of this also." They so contrived it that Joseph Loyka sent that same day for the mayor, and came to terms with him about the price of the farm, which the mayor bought in his own name. A few days after the terms of the agreement were made out in writing, and soon after the gravedigger brought Frank's money, which in great part defrayed the cost of the farm.

And here the Mayor desired that Bartos should also sign his name as a witness to the agreement. But Bartos absolutely refused his signature, fearing lest Joseph might hear that he was the cause of it all and might yet revoke the agreement at the last moment—a notion which was not altogether devoid of foundation.

And so it came to pass that Joseph decamped from Frishetts, not being able to support the ridicule which assailed him on an estate where he could support no one near himself—not even his own father. He sneaked off without giving his neighbours one farewell embrace, as though he had never in his life been on intimate terms with them. He

sneaked off in the early hours of the morning, when he thought that every one was still asleep, and he could consequently most easily elude the mockery and taunts of the village—the last taunts and mockery.

He eluded them for that day. He migrated to a distant quarter of the country where people knew him not. But taunts and mockery were raised like dust behind him when it was learnt how he had eluded them. The “kalounkarska,” which they had intended to sing at his departure was now sung by the irritated youths of Frishetts through the long hours of the evening, and before the farmstead long into the night.





CHAPTER XI.

IN the cemetery at Bartos' house, consequently with Staza and the gravedigger, were Frank and old Loyka. They conducted together their modest household, Frank busying himself about the management of all outside the house, and Staza devoting herself to domestic duties.

Frank and Staza had reached an age, when life wishes to burst forth in the song of the skylark. Where such an eye directs its gaze, the bud unfolds, the rose blossoms. The sky is draped in a garment of transparent blue, every star hath its own language, every ray of moonlight brings a message down to earth. The earth is draped in a garment of green, and this green is full of hope, the birds sing songs about it, the leaves of the wood murmur about it. The garish light of day trenches far upon the depths of night, and night with its own golden speech of dawn trenches far upon the day itself. The young heart reels between waking and dreaming; presentiment and uncertainty contend about it, the presentiment of joy above which there is none; uncertainty which is half a certainty because the world is so fair.

Once Staza sat upon the grave of her mother: she did not sing "Oh rest in peace," either to her mother or to the other dead. But she felt weary and oppressed, she knew not why, and then she interpreted the oppression to be sorrow for never having known her mother. And she would most gladly have delved a fresh grave beside her mother's grave and laid herself in it, not by any means as a corpse, but that she might again tap at her mother's coffin and tell her something which she had not yet breathed even to herself.

At this moment came Frank to her, and when he stood beside her, he was for the first time at a loss for a word. Everything that he had said to her hitherto seemed insufficient. He wished to say much more and therefore said nothing.

The dawn of life shot its crimson streamers before him, he had his soul full of spring, full of sap and beauty, and when he wished to express it all, he cast his eyes down to the ground and his tongue seemed parched with a long drought. He had his soul full of sunlight, and when he wished to reveal it in its full brightness, he had tears in his eyes.

And when he had stood thus a long time and could not find anything to say, and yet wished to say something—he found nothing else but the enquiry, "Oh ! Staza, and so thou dost not sing any more."

Staza quivered at these words, glanced up at him and then looked on the ground : glanced up at him with a gleam in her eyes which he had never seen there before, with fervour so that her bosom was expanded and was penetrated by it. And when she glanced down to the ground, she did not raise her eyes any more, but from the heaving of her own bosom it was evident that this gleam of light and fervour had elevated her whole existence.

Frank was melancholy ; what he had said did not satisfy him, and he could not think of anything else. Even Staza was melancholy, because she could not find anything to say at all : but after a brief pause she threw herself at full length on the grass, a deep sigh escaped from her bosom, and then she quickly rose to her feet and without casting one glance at Frank, ran lightly away.

Perhaps she at last told her mother what she wanted to say.

Frank scarcely ventured to glance at her as she ran away, and still less ventured to ask himself the question why she ran away. And he sat down exactly on the place where she had been seated a moment before, only that he looked toward the wicket-gate and then called to mind how he had come to the cemetery the first time with the measure for his grandfather's grave. And then he called to mind how he had slept in his grandfather's grave, and how he and Staza had nestled together. And

all at once he started as though something had stung him in the heart.

And now Staza and Frank avoided one another, or more properly they sought one another but when they ought to have found one another they did not find one another, and when they found one another, they were melancholy and sought one another once more. They, who had grown side by side, like two flower stems, only now became conscious that they were side by side, and began to separate from one another, in order that they might yearn for one another's presence.

When at even Staza worked in the living room, certainly Frank was not there, and wandered somewhere under the window or outside the burial ground, in the fields, perhaps, even in the woods, God knows where. And if Frank was in the living room, Staza would rather have laid her down beside the charnel house than have been at the same time in the same room with him ; and again she glanced into his eyes which were so clear and fervent.

And yet again, sometimes, when by accident they met one another, it seemed to them as though there could not be in the world a greater happiness than such meetings, so that they measured time by them, although they dwelt under the same roof.

When Bartos, the gravedigger, observed what I here relate, he said to Frank, " You will not sleep another night at our house, Frank, you will go to the

farm; the farm is your own, and requires a hospodar without delay.

And now it seemed to Frank as though Bartos had announced to him some dire misfortune. Frank begged not to be dismissed to the farm until the morrow. But Bartos said, "You go there at once, just as you are, without saying a word to anyone."

"Not even to Staza?" asked Frank.

"Not even to Staza," said Bartos.

And so Frank departed that same day without saying a word to anyone.

When several days had elapsed, old Loyka said "I wonder where Frank is roving; 'tis several days since he has been at home." "I have not seen him now for several days," said Bartos, "I know not where he is roving." I know not whether this answer contented Loyka, but certainly it did not content Staza, who was now constantly on the watch to see whether Loyka or Bartos would begin to mention Frank.

She would gladly have enquired a hundred times in the hour what had become of him, and yet she never summoned courage to ask even once.

"I wonder why Frank doesn't come," said old Loyka, after several days.

"I wonder he does not come," said Bartos.

And it was the only thing she heard of him for several days, and yet she always watched with immeasurable anxiety for the occasion when Loyka

should again enquire for his son. Once Loyka asked Staza herself whether she knew where Frank was. "I do not know," said Staza, and after this she once more seated herself on her mother's grave, buried her hot face in the clover, and doubtless told her mother to the very end what that other time she had only just begun to speak about.

In the meanwhile, Bartos went to the mayor, and both together went to the Loykas' farm, and advised Frank how to manage his estate; instructed him, worked with him, and were always ready with friendly counsel.

Once Bartos came home and said to Loyka, "I know at last where Frank is."

At these words Staza grew red and white several times in the same minute, just as though some one had announced to her that she must from that minute suffer some dire adversity.

"Frank is at home with his mother, who is sick unto death and longs for you to come and visit her," exclaimed Bartos.

"I go to the farm!" began Loyka, vehemently. "To your wife, who is sick unto death," put in Bartos. And here old Loyka was, for that day, completely metamorphosed. He did not speak a word, leant his head on his hands, turned over in his mind various plans and looked another man.

"So you think, Bartos, that I have to go to the farm," he asked, as if on the brink of

some final determination which he specially dreaded.

"I think that you ought to go. If you wish it, I will conduct you," said Bartos. And here the matter was half decided.

What a wholly different effect it had upon Staza. How gladly, without any hesitation, would she have run to the bedside of the invalid, how gladly would she have watched there, how gladly would she have tended her. How instantly would she have left everything that she might be present where there was most need of her. No one invited her, and she would have sped like the wind. The gravedigger invited Loyka, and Loyka prepared himself to go, as though he was preparing himself for his own death.

"How many years is it since I have been on the estate," asked old Loyka, still undecided.

"Oh, many a long year," said Bartos. "In the meantime your son has grown up and is like a nosegay—'tis a pleasure to look at him."

At these words Staza let fall everything which she held in her hands, and for a long time was at cross purposes in all she did. She poured water from the ewer into the basin until it overflowed. When she observed this, she wished to wipe it up with something, and emptied the salt seller into the water imagining it was something she had forgotten to salt.

That evening, Loyka and Bartos wended their way to the farm, at Frishetts, which Loyka still supposed to be in the possession of Joseph. It must have been a very crushing pilgrimage for him, for let Bartos begin any topic of conversation, Loyka did not listen to him, but remained shut up in his own sombre reflections, and at intervals he heaved a heavy sigh and said in a constrained voice, "Well, then, this is my last journey." Bartos did not tease him to converse. Moreover, they had to rest at every boundary stone, and the walk, which under ordinary circumstances, was easily accomplished in half an hour, was prolonged to a full hour. And then each time they sat down Loyka said, "My Lord and Master, I go to the Mount of Calvary."

But with this great oppression which overpowered Loyka, all traces of that tempestuous spirit which had oftentimes shaken his whole inner man, seemed to have disappeared. He went as though the road was one which it was impossible to avoid—he went exhausted and oppressed, but still he did not turn aside.

When they reached the Loykas' farm it was almost dark. Loyka seated himself exhausted by the abutment, beside which long ago Frank had wept for the death of the grandfather. And as he sat by this abutment, he spoke in a voice of forced meekness. "Bend, proud knees, and entreat my son to permit me to cross his courtyard. Hands

clasp yourselves in prayer and entreat my son to open that gate for so many years barred against me. Enter his doors, ye words, and entreat and implore. For surely it is not possible that I must stifle even my words. Then forth, oh! stubborn thoughts, and learn humbleness! My son Joseph!" said he raising his voice, "lo! thy father stands at thy threshold, only prythee, promise me one thing, by word of mouth and before witnesses, that thou wilt not set that dog upon me which long ago fawned upon me and which I fed with my bounty." And more to the same effect.

At times it was like praying, at times like weeping, at times like affected humility, at times like reproach.

While he sat thus and Bartos stood beside him, the sound of harps and violins issued from the courtyard, and several vocal melodies were wafted to their ears. Old Loyka was silent, raised his head and looked round about him. He listened. He looked round about him to see where he was sitting, and he listened to find out whence the music came. He saw that he was seated by the gates of Joseph's farm, and that the music resounded therefrom.

"Whither have you led me Bartos?" enquired Loyka and rose to his feet, for he could not trust what he had heard and seen.

"And you said that my wife was sick unto death," he further enquired.

“So I said.”

“Why are they playing music where some one is sick unto death?” enquired Loyka.

“If music can play after a funeral, why should it not be played before the funeral? Did not the music play the whole day, when they brought out your father for me to bury?”

Loyka mused awhile and was silent. After this, Loyka said of his own accord, “Let us enter.”

He opened the gate, remained standing in the gateway and listened. The music played on.

Here Loyka said, “They have not yet loosed the dog upon me and I cannot hear one barking. The music played on.

Then they stepped into the courtyard, and old Loyka said in a much milder tone of voice than before, at the abutment, “look in wonder on me all you who here in days gone by craved a hospitable shelter. Did any of you come here so humbly as I come this day? Had any of you to stoop to such servile entreaties as I have stooped to? Oh, how could I come more humbly than I come this day?” And the music played on. Loyka listened and said, “I have not yet heard the baying of the hound.”

And when he had said this he perceived that the music and the singing were in the chambers beside the coach-house, and now there was the chattering of many voices. He saw and heard feet approaching, and not looking up to see who it was, he bowed

his body to the ground and cried, "If thou art my son Joseph, oh! I pray thee only do not drive me away for this one day. For the sake of my aged wife, I implore thee, for the sake of thy mother, who bore thee, and whose only fault was that she loved thee all too well, and now is sick unto death. I promise that I will depart again as soon as she is dead if I survive her death."

And more to the same effect. It was Vena who approached him and said, "I welcome you, pantata, to your own farmstead."

Old Loyka drew himself up, looked round about him and listened. Afterwards his eyes rested on Vena. "Thou art Vena," he said, "*I* know thee. What has brought thee here? Thou went wandering from here."

"Now I am here again, pantata, and we are expecting you," said Vena.

"Expecting me? And who are those yonder playing?"

"The harpers, fiddlers, and singers. Of course, you know them all," said Vena.

"And what do they want here?"

"They are expecting you."

"Expecting me! Well, well, well, well."

Then he took Vena by the hand and said, "Thou wise man, do not trot me out to make a fool of me, and tell me, is it safe to cross the courtyard?"

“I am sent for you, pantata, and I have to conduct you wherever you please—to the pension house or the farmhouse; but our good old mistress is in the farmhouse, and, therefore, I might perhaps have conducted you to the farmhouse.”

“Ha! then, lead me to the farmhouse, said Loyka, and he said it just as though he had by this confirmed his own death warrant, which it was impossible now to avoid. And, even as the wretch condemned to die, just before his death, dares to implore some favour for himself, so old Loyka implored—“You hear, Vena, I am going into the farmhouse; but, first, lead me yonder, to the chambers by the coach-house, that I may gaze upon those spirits who there await my spirit.”

And he hung on Vena's arm, and Vena led him to the spot. When they caught sight of him a flourish of trumpets rang forth. Then the family of the kalounkar came out upon the doorstep, the cloth pedlar, several tinkers, and in a word, all whoever just then were lodging under that roof, and all said, “We welcome you pantata; we have already been expecting you.” And when old Loyka hardly recognised those figures by the scanty light of a candle, his head went round, so that he scarcely attended to what they were saying.

“Vena, let me not stay here any longer. Good lad, now I have seen it, now lead me to the farmhouse.

When he departed, a flourish of music again rang forth, and Loyka, staggering, and leaning upon Vena, reeled towards his house. And when he was already not far from the threshold, he said, "Only bend thyself, proud tongue, and pray. Harsh words, swaddle yourselves in silk, be soft and meek, be very meek and soft, ay, as soft as the droppings of birds ! And here already some one stood on the door step and said, "I welcome you. tatinka ; we have been expecting you."

He who pronounced these words was not Joseph ; it was Frank.

And here motes seemed to flicker before Loyka's eyes, and after a minute or two, Bartos, Vena, and Frank carried him into the farmhouse.

They laid him on his bed, for the strain upon his nerves had been too great, and he had fainted. He breathed. He opened his eyes for a moment and closed them again immediately. He fell asleep.

After so many years he again slept under his own roof, and slept in the farmhouse.

It was already pretty late on the following day when he awoke ; and when he awoke, he looked fixedly at the ceiling as if he was trying to call to mind how it used to look. Very much that had occurred seemed to him like a dream. As yet, he could hardly manage to assure himself that he was not still asleep.

And when his eyes ranged from the ceiling and sought the objects that were nearest to him, here stood, here sat in the apartment, his wife, Frank, and Bartos. Loyka greeted them with a prolonged stare, but did not utter a word. He only gazed at them.

And when his eyes wandered to the door he saw several of the servants standing there, one of whom said, "We await your order, pantata, where we are to go and plough."

Old Loyka again turned his eyes towards his wife, his son and Bartos, and said, "tell me nothing: if it is a dream, let me dream on." And to the servants he said, "go and plough beyond the meadow, I will come and see how much you have worked."

When the servants had gone, he again looked towards his son and said, "and Joseph allows you to be here? Does he allow me to be here also?"

"You are at home, Papa," said Frank, "and we will never leave it again."

"At home? Prythee tell me nothing whatever until afterwards," and he rubbed his forehead. After a while he said to his wife, "They told me you were sick unto death."

"Now she is well again," said Bartos.

When Loyka got upon his feet he enquired, "may I venture to walk about the room?"

"About the room, the courtyard, in the fields, where you please," answered Frank.

Loyka smiled and walked about the room, and said as he did so, "It is all a very well concocted plan, but I am already old, why should I not allow myself to take a few steps in a room which was once my own."

"It is yours, so long as you are pleased to stay in it," said Bartos.

"Good lad, I must trust you, although I do not know yet whether you speak the truth." And Loyka looked out of the window at the courtyard.

"I wonder who that is standing in the courtyard?" he said, "If I am not mistaken it is the old harvester."

"He has been already waiting two days to see you and to have a talk with you," they said.

"Well let him come and say his say," responded Loyka, "I always gladly talk with him."

They called to the harvester and he came. "I am come to you, pantata, to enquire whether you will require the services of the old harvester this summer? - Because they are ready to engage us in Caslavaska, and I said that we would go if our old pantata Loyka did not require our services."

"Have you spoken to the young folk," enquired Loyka.

"They told me that everything depended on you," answered the harvester.

"Well, if they said that to you come all of you to our harvesting. To be sure, where else would you go, when we need your services here."

“We will be here on call early to prepare ourselves,” said the reaper and took his leave.

Old Loyka turned to his friends and said, “I know very well that Joseph will not be pleased, but why should I not exasperate him a little? Just let them come. Of course, I shall still employ them.”

After this he said, “Still Joseph does not come hither to drive me away?”

“He is not coming,” said Frank.

“Then if he is not coming, let me go into the courtyard,” and they led him into the courtyard.

In the courtyard the servants of old Loyka saluted him, called him ‘pantata,’ and, in general, behaved towards him very respectfully. Old Loyka inspected the field implements, inspected the house and was evidently well pleased.

He went to the chambers by the coach-house, there all was just as it had been in his time. The family of the kalounkar, only a few inches taller and perhaps with one or two additions to its numbers; the cloth pedlar, a little shrunken, and the harpers and fiddlers with the same instruments, only that perhaps, they too, were already a little shrunken. All welcomed old Loyka with smiles and pretty speeches, and one of them said that now all was once more just as it used to be in the old days.

Then they begged Loyka to come and sit down with them. After this they began to relate about things past and present, and what changes there

had been, and old Loyka felt as though someone was planting a new heart in his breast and in his head the song of the laverock once more resounded.

Then the old kalounkar said, "I think, pantata, if you would be so good as to suffer us to stay here sometime under this roof, that the Lord God would reward you for it on the other side."

Old Loyka said, "When I see you here I can believe that I am here—just as if you had been my roots and I could again anchor myself here by you.

They were in very truth his roots, and old Loyka anchored himself here by them.

After this his neighbours from the village came and welcomed old Loyka. They declared that they were interested about the construction of some public gardens, and that they only waited for his advice before beginning to lay them out.

In a word, every one treated old Loyka just as though there had never been a period when he was a fugitive from his home, just as though this day was a continuation of the brighter happier days of old. Not, perhaps, that Loyka should no more remember what had been. By no means. He very well remembered that but yesterday he was a wanderer in the world, but at the same time there emerged in him to-day a fresh consciousness that, perhaps, there might be an end of this wandering.

And so Bartos' plan succeeded. Those spiders' webs which had obscured old Loyka's mind, dissi-

pated themselves of their own accord, and he every day visibly convalesced. Once more he took his walk every evening to the chambers by the coach-house, and himself invited the inmates to converse and sing. "Be merry, lads, be merry," he used to say.

And the old life began again at the Loykas'. That farm was now once more just as people had known it all their lives. Old Loyka so far convalesced that he threw off several years as though they had been a few heavy sheaves of corn ; so that at last his friends ventured to tell him the whole truth, both about what had happened to Joseph, how he had sold out of the farm, and how the farm was bought for Frank, and how being still young, Frank begged that he, Loyka, should manage it for him. Ay, he so far convalesced that sometimes he would say, when he paid a visit to the chambers, "So, my lads, tell me the story of old Loyka when he was a wanderer in the world."

"Ah ! well, he was always very merry through it all," so they began the story, and that was the only part where they did not tell him the whole truth, because they knew how greatly pleased he was that people should think he had been merry in the height of his misfortune.

They even told him that the illness of his wife was a mere pretext in order to coax him home again, and that it had succeeded.

“ Ah ! well,” said old Loyka about his wife, “ she suffered quite enough poor thing when she was here by herself.

And thus old Loyka got himself home once more.





CHAPTER XII.

WHAT more have I to relate ?

Frank again began to rove away from the farm, and of course they knew to a hair whither he went. But it was not true exactly as they thought it: that is to say, when he went to the cemetery he went with a heavy heart as in the old days when he carried hither the measure for his grandfather's grave. And now he carried thither a kind of measure, the measure of his own heart—was it that he would order a grave for it. By no means. In order that he might lay it in a heart softer than any dust and sweeter than any flower.

And yet indeed the path was as toilsome as if he were going to bury his heart in the grave. Enchantment seemed to murmur around him and shot about his path in the mist and the clear weather: his heart beat with a presentiment of rapture, and his hand vacillated—so it will be to the end of the world.

When he came to the cemetery he posted himself by the wicket gate, as on that day long past, and gazed eagerly. And he saw the great ruddy cross

and on it the white iron figure of the Christus, then lesser crosses, then graves without crosses; some green, some flowery, some half sunk in the ground.

And there was in that cemetery something vast and incomprehensible, something that we can never analyze, something vast as a sea, chilling as winter's ice and snow. But to-day the breath of winter did not issue from its gates, rather a portion of the spring seemed to hover over that dwelling place of the dead.

When he stood by the wicket-gate, he waited and everything for which he waited, could emerge from the grave-digger's humble abode in the person of Staza.

Staza tripped forth just as on that day long past, but how different. It was not a child who hopped even over the graves like a small bird, or a butterfly. It was a pensive, blooming maiden, a rose, which blossoms on a single bush, there to glisten and then fade. She walked with her head bowed and seemed as though she would fain water those graves with her tears. And she was infinitely charming.

Frank had opened the wicket-gate a hundred times, and to-day it seemed as though he knew not how he could ever enter by it. When he thought that Staza might observe him, he retreated and only peeped furtively through the bars. And he saw Staza who was the self same Staza whom he had led about the whole neighbourhood, and who yet

was not the same. At least it seemed to him as though he saw her to-day for the first time, and as though he had to speak to her for the first time.

Staza seated herself on her mother's grave, and her eyes rested on the white-iron figure of the Christus on the ruddy cross. After a moment or two she whispered rather than sang, "odpocinite v pokojji verne dusicky." (Rest in peace ye faithful spirits !)

But she did not finish her song. Something seemed to snap it asunder half-way, the second half remained unuttered.

And here Frank felt constrained : just as if he ought to finish in tears what Staza had left incomplete in her song, just as if he wronged her by his silence.

He posted himself before the wicket-gate in order that she might see him.

"Oh ! Staza," he said.

Staza rose from the ground, and half joyously half pensively approached the wicket-gate.

"I welcome thee, Frank," said she.

"Oh ! Staza will you open it for me," said Frank.

Here Staza said archly, "Have you so soon forgotton how to open it ?"

"I have not forgotten," responded Frank, "but I have no longer the right unless you allow me."

"You have it open !" said Staza.

“ Oh ! Staza, I am come to ask your hand in marriage,” said Frank after a short silence.

“ You have it here ! ” said Staza and gave her hand to him.

What need of more ? What need of elaborate circumlocutions in order that the heart should speak truth ?

The heart of those children knew of no such circumlocutions, it spoke thus, and therefore spoke sublimely, nobly, and solemnly, because it spoke the truth.

“ I wished to have thee for my wife, and I did not know whether thou wert willing to be my wife, and that fretted me,” said Frank.

“ If you had not come for me, I should have had to think where Bartos should delve a grave. And I had already chosen a spot. Where else than yonder, and she pointed towards her mother’s grave.”

And both their hearts heaved with feelings different than a moment before : the sentiment of unexpected bliss exhausted them, and bliss is burdensome before we are accustomed to it.

They took one another by the hand and went into the little house to tell Bartos what they had just told one another.

“ I wish to have Staza for my wife and am come to speak about it,” said Frank by way of salutation when they entered.

Bartos measured Frank from head to heel and said, "Good, Staza go away."

When Staza was gone, Bartos said, "You know, I suppose Frank, that Staza is a child not born in wedlock."

"But all the same, a child," responded Frank.

"That she does not know, neither do I know, nor perhaps does anybody know who was her father."

"Is there any need to know it," enquired Frank.

"That people will talk about this and will say, 'Look! there goes Frank Loyka arm in arm with his wife,' and they will laugh at her origin."

"Why should a man trouble himself about an origin?"

"Every one thinks his or her origin the important thing and acts accordingly."

"And do they mend matters thereby?"

"They do not. But it goes against them when it comes about as in her case."

"And was she created against the will of the Creator?"

"That I do not know; but if you wish to have her for your wife you ought to be told about it."

"I see no difference between her and others, and what I see is that she is dearer to me than all the world, let her origin be what it may."

"Good! call her!"

And Bartos himself called Staza. "You have led one another by the hand," he said, "lead one

another by the hand for all your life." And this strong man who had not his equal, at these words well nigh gave way.

After this he said "I found thee, dear Staza, long have I had thee with me, and now Frank has claimed thee. What have we to do? He has a greater right to thee than I have. He is young and loves thee."

At these words Staza threw herself on Bartos' breast, and there sobbed out her great happiness, wept there also her thanks to him for being a father to her and her sorrow at leaving him.

"One thing more, oh! Bartos," said Frank.

"What, pray?"

"You know that my parents dwell in the farm house and will dwell there with me for many a long year, let us hope; the pension house is therefore empty, will you not settle there and be our neighbour—mine and Staza's?"

At these words Bartos again measured Frank from head to heels and said, "I pensioned off! No, dear boy. Here I am lord and master, and am little skilled in accepting pensions or returning thanks for them. It is possible that you would like to have me there. But we cannot tell, and I should never manage to pry into your eyes every day to see whether you still liked to have me there. Do you think I shall be low-spirited here alone. I have a large family, as yet I have never felt oppressed or

low-spirited among them. Who knows ? Perhaps, I shall be needed here. The next time some father flies from his son's harsh bounty and knoweth not whither to turn, he will come to Bartos. And what would he do if he did not find me here ? ”

Frank was silent. It was evident he deemed that Bartos judged him harshly.

“ Do not be angry, boy,” said Bartos. “ Possibly I shall come and visit you from time to time, to see how you treat your father. Do your best to show yourself at once a good hospodar and a good son—of that I must be first assured. Promise nothing. Even your brother promised and would have deprived your father of reason. I do not trust you little sons, because your fathers make themselves dependent upon you. But promise me one thing, invite me to your wedding.”

All was so unanswerably true which Bartos had said, that Frank did not utter a word in reply.

“ Do not be anxious about me,” he added. “ Now Staza must be the dearest object of your care.” On this he kissed Staza and kissed Frank, and so the betrothal ended.

What they wished to say to one another, and what they had said to one another how simple it was ! How entirely the outcome of souls already united, and yet, before they had reached the goal of speech they had to undergo all the pleasing

lapses, doubts and problems of lovers—true passion follows no other course.

And now they both enjoyed the most charming rambles together. They led one another by the hand and went to visit those hedgerows, those bushes, all the haunts where their childish hearts had beat beside the quails. They visited their little chapels, in which as children they worshipped their Creator with the laverock. Everything was the same and yet it was all different. On every hedge was more green and more glitter ; the air seemed more alive with singing ; every laverock piped a more fervid lay ; every whisper of nature was more touching.

And so everything was different, but it seemed as though only now all nature manifested itself in its true essence, which none understand who have not looked upon the world with an eye enlightened by true love. Even Staza was different ; even Frank was different. When they looked at one another they seemed to catch a glimpse of each other's souls, of something inexhaustible and eternal. They seemed to catch a glimpse of each other's soul and in their eyes gleamed the light of eternal blessedness, beautiful as the glory of a Saint ; in their eyes gleamed the truth of eternal rapture made more beautiful by tears. Each of them was different, each seemed endued with angels' wings, to flutter round the other ; each of them was more exalted, and their thoughts were like prayers.

Staza's love was not the least appreciably less fervent, less genuine, less holy because she was a child not born in wedlock. The divine breath hath not such narrow instincts as we poor humans. Only let the heart be right and the divine breath does not enquire what was its origin. The Son of God was a child not born in wedlock, and the divine love did not grow cold on that account, the divine love accepted him for its own Son. It is only we poor humans who, in our littleness, grow cold and shame-faced at the thought of a base origin, and yet the origin of us all is from no other source than from that eternal love from which every grain of wheat germinates, who threw that grain of wheat, for whose delight it germinates to maturity—wherefore should we trouble ourselves about that ?

What more have I to relate ?

About three o'clock one afternoon the sexton, Vanek, strode across the village green of Frishetts with the great key in his hand in the direction of the chapel.

Those who stood at the window and saw him did not ask one another whether there was a fire or whether some one was dead. They knew why he went to the chapel just at that hour, and only said to one another "So it will be at once."

And here they walked out in front of their farm houses, and seeing neighbours lounging about the other farms, took a few steps towards the centre of

the green, and saluted each other just as they had spoken at home—"So it will be at once."

All were dressed in holiday attire, even their faces were in holiday attire, the whole village was in holiday attire. Down the middle of the village green were posted branches of may with pennons streaming, the whole forming an arcade which stretched from the Loykas' farm to the chapel. Even the Loykas' house itself was smothered in pine branches and looked as spick and span as on a high festival.

On this occasion Vena again marched with a basket in his hand, he had rosolek in the basket, and poured out and gave to drink to any one who desired. On this occasion he was in good humour as though he was going to be wed himself. He poured out the liquor very briskly and continually invited the good folk to drink "now to their health, neighbours!"

"How, then, do you greet your new mistress, Vena," they enquired.

"I greet her well," said Vena, "and verily I say as thus, look you, 'The Lord God grant you as many little dears for me to carry across the green as there are flasks here! That's how I greet her!'"

"And how many may that be," said the neighbours laughing.

"How can I tell until you have drunk out the lot," said Vena, and constantly invited them to imbibe.

To look at him you would have said it was Vena's own bridal day that was being celebrated. And nothing would have embittered his gay humour, only one question from neighbour Kmoch, Barushka's father, vexed him. "How many wagons are required to bring home Staza's marriage portion," he enquired with a very saucy leer.

On this Vena vented his brimming choler in these words " *You* have not wagons enough to carry home a single one of her good qualities. So *you* want to be sarcastic do you? What do you know, ye peasant proprietors, of the essentials of a happy marriage? You barter your daughters on the market place to the man who makes the highest bid. 'A crown! two crowns! ten crowns! twelve crowns!'—those are your daughters. And so *you* would sneer would you? He who throws down most of the dross is the heaven-sent husband. And then you shrink into your pension house when you have accomplished this feat of wondrous wisdom, and how many wagons are wanted to carry your pensioner's portion? I would undertake to wheel you away, portion and all, on a hand barrow.'

Here Vena had worked himself into a frenzy, so that he did not know when he ought to conclude his declamation, although we must add in conclusion that all the neighbours condemned Kmoch's ill-timed question.

"She will not be such a one," continued Vena, "that her father must wander through the

market places like a beggar, because they tormented him under his own roof. There will be no need that the vejminkar should make his last will before she sets foot in his house, because afterwards he will be worried out of his five senses. And with such good qualities as she possesses Staza will need many wagons to carry all easily."

Perhaps Vena would have declaimed at yet greater length had not the march of events deadened the effect of Kmoch's insolent remark.

From the cemetery, whither Frank had driven to claim his bride, his best man rode at a gallop, and said that the happy pair would be at the village in a trice, that old Bartos had joined their hands by the graves of Staza's mother and Frank's grandfather, and said "Your love grew out of the grave, may it last beyond all graves."

At this moment Vanek began to ring the bell in the chapel, and outside the village resounded the fiddles of well-known fiddlers, who were assisted by musicians from the whole surrounding district.

The neighbours on the village green flocked into the green arcade which formed an alley as far as the chapel, and awaited the young bride and bridegroom, only Kmoch turned away in another direction.

Here I must touch off a good side in the neighbours of Frishetts, namely, that they awaited the young couple in perfect good faith. Frank, by his behaviour towards his father, had so firmly installed

himself in their esteem that nothing could shake him in it. We cannot indeed disguise the fact that with all of them it somewhat ran counter to their ideas of what should be when he chose for his wife an illegitimate orphan, for in these matters no one was better or worse than his neighbours, and everyone said secretly to himself, "For my part I could not have done it." But as it was Frank who did it they made their peace with him, and as it was Staza who was the object of his choice they made their peace with her as well.

And so the happy pair were escorted by such a goodly company as ne'er was seen before in Frishetts, and a festival was celebrated the like of which few a short time before ever expected to see again originate from Loyka's farm. People collected on foot and in carriages from all parts of the neighbourhood—not only in honour of Frank's bridal day, but also in honour of old Loyka's recovery, who had for so many years wandered among them without health and without mind.

What more have I to relate ?

Beside the coach house in the two chambers the legends and ballads of old times, which had been banished for so many years, took root once more. And Loyka's courtyard beamed like the face of a happy listener.

If we wish to take a peep for a moment, we can do so. The farm is again free of access to everyone :

the cloth pedlar and the family of the kalounkar have made themselves quite at home, tinkers come for a night's lodging, musicians often turn aside thither, and listeners, male and female, come from the village to hear them play.

Again Frank listened to the song or the story in these chambers, and lead Staza thither—how well-known and beloved wherever they are seen !

And, if we wish, we can take a peep at Loyka sometimes in the morning when the servants are preparing themselves for their work afield.

Old Loyka with his pipe in his mouth promenades about the court, inspects the implements, and the servants salute him with "The Lord God give you good-morrow, pantata."

Old Loyka thanks them. "As God wills, my children," says he.

"Are we to go to-day to work in the meadow, pantata."

"Have you asked your young master? go where he tells you."

"He said we were to ask you."

"Well, well, then go to the meadow. But always ask your young master."

"Look, here he comes."

And here Frank comes forward. "What do you think? Must they go to the meadow?"

And Frank knows so many reasons why they must go to the meadow and nowhere else, that old Loyka

is all smiles, to think that he is still competent to manage the estate.

“Well, well,” he adds, “then go to the meadow to be sure.”

“Then Stazicka (little Staza), as all on the farm call her, comes and says that they must go to breakfast. Old Loyka chucks her under the chin, and looks into her sparkling eyes. “Good child, good child,” says he. Then he lets go her chin, and takes her by the hand. This very day come a year you will not come for me alone, little Staza.”

“Why should I not come for you, papa.”

“Tut : come, of course you will, but with my grandchild in your arms.”

On this little Staza blushes, and thinks to herself, full of fond anticipation “This very day come a year.”

Or suppose we pay them a visit, come a year, at harvest. The harvesters once more make the farm their first halting place when they go a-harvesting, and old Loyka promenades among them with pipe in mouth.

“I come from the young pantata,” says the spokesman of the harvesters, “in order that you should select us yourself, pantata, because you know us now as he says ; and I also think it is best.”

“Well, well,” says old Loyka, “how could we fail to know one another after so many years.”

And after this he chooses according to his taste, and as seems best.

"This summer we shall have a merry harvest," says the harvester.

"This summer! so I believe you. And when Staza leads off the dance for you! Such a mistress has not been seen on the farm as Stazicka."

"She is a worthy mistress, pantata. Once Annette came here with us—you know, pantata, mnuh! her only fault is she does not know how she came into the world. And women being but women, they would not endure her among them. 'How, then, is it her fault,' said your little Staza. "We do not drive away an animal when it nestles against us, in what is Annette worse than an animal? And as you know, pantata, she took her as nurse to your pretty grandchild."

"Just so, just so," smiled old Loyka.

But the whole farm was quite on foot when there for a time came on a visit the gravedigger Bartos. "I begin to be aweary among the dead," said he, "and since the living like me, I gladly come awhile among them. Well, and you like to have me with you?"

And it was a wonder they did not carry him on their shoulders, that is to say, if they could have borne his weight. And as they could not do this, they all hung upon him. Frank and Staza and the

little fellow which Staza took from Annette that she might proudly exhibit it.

“Why am I made so strong, I wonder,” Bartos would say, “if I may not fling you off.” And he pretended jestingly to drive them before him that he might free himself from them. But it was worst of all when he prepared to depart. Here even old Loyka fastened on him, and all held him, that he should still remain with them. And here Bartos, the gravedigger, for a time feigned to chivy them away, just as though he would shake them off. And we must say what then happened, seldom happened—it being the only occasion when the Herculean Bartos succumbed. Frank, Staza, Loyka, and the little boy overpowered him, and sometimes the little boy alone prevailed.

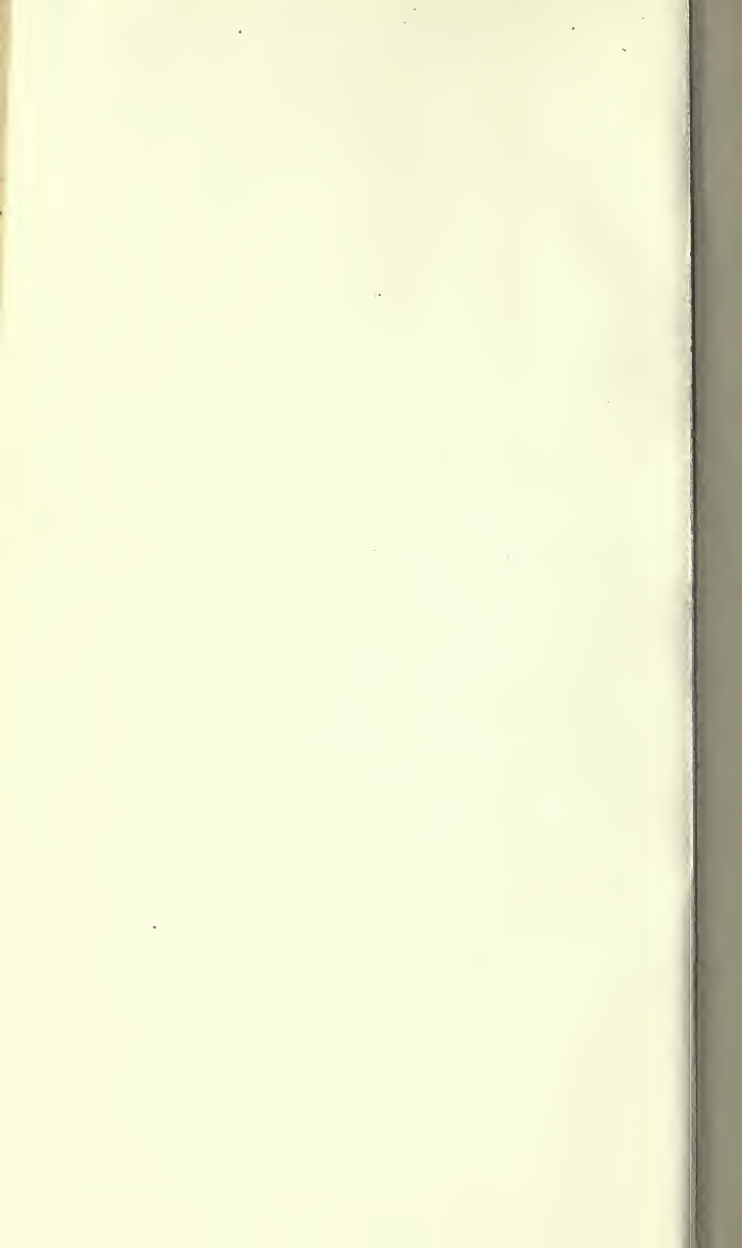
“Well, well,” laughed old Loyka, and then when at even the musicians came there was in the farm a most charming idyll.

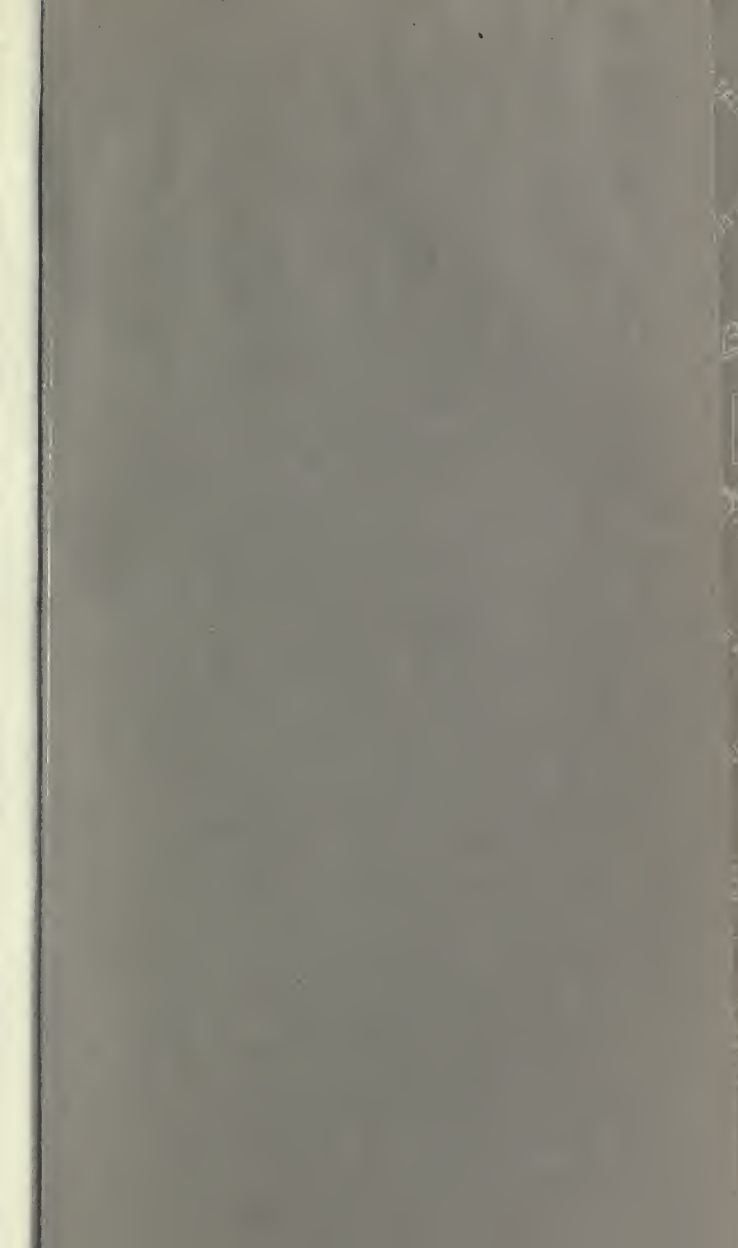
Long had they sought this idyll, long had they wandered in search of it, but they found it at last. And this idyll ends as it began—
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FINIS.

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MJ





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